

Inter-Sub-Mission

By Susannah Donim

A 'Master of the Universe' Investment Banker and his university professor wife are a happy and successful couple. Then their Psychologist friend persuades them to participate in an unusual study and things change for everyone.

Prologue – early May

Dinner was over. We were relaxing on the patio, listening to the gurgle of the river, and finishing off the second bottle.

“So have you decided what you’re doing for your sabbatical?” Bill asked me. “Three months, isn’t it?”

“I haven’t decided to take one at all yet. It isn’t terribly convenient at the moment, and Jackie can’t take time off until the end of the summer term.”

“I thought your company insists you take a break within two years of being promoted – because of the high levels of stress for new partners?”

“Not so much ‘insists’ as ‘strongly encourages’.”

“Well *I’d* like him to take a break,” my wife put in. “His stress levels are over the moon. Mine are too, come to that.”

“Rubbish, I’m fine,” I said.

“You are not!” she said. “You’re not even enjoying the job anymore, are you?”

“Of course I am!” I snapped. “And I’m doing very well.”

“You’re making lots of money, yes, but you’re not *happy*. You’re always shouting at people, even me. And you get exasperated when I ask you to make trivial decisions, like which movie to see, or even what you want for dinner.” She turned to Bill for support.

“Classic symptoms,” he said, sympathetically.

“You’re supposed to be my best friend, not my shrink.” I turned back to Jackie. “And *you* never said anything about being stressed yourself. Is that old fool working her too hard, Bill?”

“Well she is the best Assistant Professor in the Astrophysics Department. I imagine Jenkins is just dumping all the admin on her.”

“Too right,” Jackie said, “I wasn’t in the lab at all last week, what with budget meetings and writing project business cases – and I haven’t set foot in the observatory for a month.”

“Actually I have an ulterior motive for asking you about your sabbatical,” Bill said, with a noticeable hesitation. “I’m in a bit of a spot, and you may be able to help.”

"Of course," Jackie said. "Anything..."

"...within reason," I smiled. "What's the problem?"

"We're having difficulty recruiting people for a slightly unusual research programme. If we don't find enough volunteers by the end of the month, they'll cut the funding. It's just that I think you two would be perfect for it, and it would fit in nicely with your sabbatical."

"What about Jackie? She can't take much time off. She's used up most of her holiday allowance. That's why I'm hesitating about the sabbatical."

"No, no. The project would be full time for *you*, but Jackie can easily do her part in the evenings and at weekends. In fact, it's quite important that she *is* working full time."

"You've got us intrigued now, Bill," Jackie said. "Tell us more." I nodded my agreement.

"Well the project protocols require me to run through an interview questionnaire with you, and only then can I explain what it's all about. I know you know I know most of the answers already, but rules are rules." He grinned.

"Oh, go on then. You psychologists!" Jackie said.

"Right, here goes." He took a couple of sheets of A4 out of his pocket. "I won't bother asking your names. First question then: *How long have you been married?*"

"Well you should know, you dick! You were my Best Man!"

He sighed. "OK, six years, and the answer to the next question is: no children. Now, *would you please describe your occupations?*"

"Partner, Atkinson Stern, Investment Analysts," I said.

"And the youngest partner they've ever had," Jackie said proudly. Bill turned to her. "Oh, is it me? Senior Lecturer, Astrophysics, Cambridge University."

"OK, that routes me down the '*Professional Couple, Both Working Full-Time*' path of the questionnaire. Here's where it starts to get interesting. *Generally speaking, who makes the decisions in your relationship?*"

Jackie and I looked at each other and grinned.

"Generally speaking..." I said.

"...we both do," she finished.

"Come on, chaps, help me out here," he pleaded.

"No, really," I said. "We consult over everything: this apartment, a new car, holidays, investments. It works because we have similar tastes."

"I wouldn't even buy a new dress till I'm sure he liked it," Jackie said.

"Although she would look gorgeous in a sack, so I don't think I've ever overruled anything she wanted."

"Yes, you have. You told me not to buy that green mermaid dress for the May Ball."

"Oh yes..."

"And you were right. It looked hideous."

"It certainly did – and you talked me out of that blue pinstripe suit."

"It made you look old."

"I thought I looked dignified."

"Nope. Just old." She grinned.

"OK, I get the picture," Bill interrupted. "Nobody wears the pants in your marriage."

"No, we *both* wear the pants," I said.

"But only *I* wear the dresses," Jackie said.

"Well you have much better legs."

"Actually yours are pretty good. They'd look great in fishnets."

"Ohhh-Kayyyy," said Bill, "moving on. Next question. *Would you say you had a 'traditional' marriage, in the sense of subservient, obedient wife and strong, protective husband?*" He laughed when he saw the looks on our faces.

"No, I would not!" I said firmly. "Jackie is my soulmate, my best friend. I would never give her orders like a servant."

But Jackie was looking thoughtful. She smiled and said, "That's right. We divide the chores evenly – more or less – but I *do* see him as my protector, I suppose. Do you remember that time we were meeting at that bar near your office? I think we were going to dinner and then the theatre, straight from work? Anyway you were held up at the office and I was sitting alone at the bar reading, and this big guy came and tried to chat me up."

"Oh yes, I remember."

"Anyway, I told him I was married and waiting for my husband. But he was obviously drunk and he said that you couldn't be much of a husband if you let me sit alone in bars. Anyway he had just put his arm around me when you walked in."

She paused. I think she was a little embarrassed. Bill was watching us both carefully.

“At first I thought he must have been an old friend,” I said. “Then I saw that you were trying to shrug his arm off. When I got closer I could see you were angry.”

“And frightened – till I saw you. You came up to us, brushed past him, took my left hand, and held it up to him, showing him my ring finger. Then you waved your own wedding ring in his face. I remember you didn’t say a word. You just looked him straight in the eye. He was much bigger than you, but he lowered his head, muttered something like ‘Sorry, mate,’ and walked out. I couldn’t believe he gave in so easily. I guess he just recognised your... I don’t know... *authority*.”

Now I was embarrassed. “It didn’t seem like a big deal at the time. I suppose I’m just used to people doing what I say – you know, at the office, and so on,” I finished lamely.

“He could have killed you.”

We were silent for a while.

Bill cleared his throat and said, “Why don’t I tell you about the project now?”

We sat back to listen.

* * *

“It’s about sex...” he began.

“All your projects are,” Jackie giggled. I shushed her. She pouted happily.

“...*kinky* sex,” he continued. “You’ve heard of dominatrix – submissive relationships?”

“Dommies and subs?” I said. “Sure.”

“Well, some of the clinicians we work with as part of our research programme have reported a marked increase recently in the number of what they call *unhealthy* relationships – couples who hurt each other, physically, often quite badly. In other cases, the relationship becomes seriously unbalanced; for example, one partner wants more extreme role-playing than the other and this leads to them breaking up. Our psychiatrists have protocols for treating these couples, but they have a distressingly low success rate. Most of the relationships end, even with a suicide in a few cases. The consensus is that clinicians have a basic lack of understanding of how a domme-sub relationship develops in the first place.”

“Isn’t it just that each partner is built that way?” Jackie said. “So when they meet, they recognise each other’s... um, proclivities, and get it together?”

I looked at her in surprise. How did she get to know about things like that?

“Well, that’s the key question: do these matching tendencies have to be *inbuilt* in each partner, or can they develop over time as part of the everyday pressures of modern life? In other words, is it ‘nature’ or ‘nurture’? These relationships seem to be on the increase, especially the failing ones – though of course the therapists may never get to see the successful ones.”

“So the university has been asked to investigate?” I asked.

“That’s right,” Bill said. “We’ve developed an experimental programme. We look for couples in successful, well-balanced relationships, ask them to do some role-playing, and report back on what they experience.”

“And you want us to take part?” Jackie asked.

“As I said, I think you’d be perfect. I’ve known you both for ages. You’re the happiest, best-matched couple I know. You’re both analytical, articulate individuals. Your insights would be invaluable.”

“Okay, dial it back a little, Mr Used Car Salesman,” I said. “You don’t have to smarm us into doing it. But we need to know the details. I have the feeling there are parts of this I’m not going to like. You used the word, *kinky*. I’m really not sure about that.”

“Oh I didn’t mean you have to have kinky sex – well that would actually be up to you – but some of what *you’d* have to do, Dan, would be a little... out there. I probably wouldn’t be suggesting this at all if it hadn’t been for that Halloween party last year...”

“Oh, *that*,” I said. “I think I see what’s coming here. You do know that was the one and only time in my life I have cross-dressed? I didn’t even play a female part in a school play – and ours was an all boys’ school.”

“But you made a fantastic cheerleader,” Jackie said, “and a really convincing girl. So sexy! I told you, you have great legs.”

“And your features are quite delicate. Not exactly *feminine*,” Bill hastened to add, afraid he was being offensive, “but not unmistakably masculine either. With the make-up Jackie put on you, and the long wig in pigtails, you easily passed as a girl... er, I mean you *could* have, if you’d wanted to.”

“Okay, okay, I’ll pretend I’m not offended for the moment. More details, please. *Details!*”

“Well, the relationship we want to study is where the woman in the relationship is a dominatrix and the man is submissive. The other way around does happen of course, but it doesn’t seem to trouble the medical profession much. I guess it’s more normal, more acceptable in modern society, and if it gets too extreme it’s more a matter for the law courts than psychiatrists. Anyway in the *domme-sub* relationship, the woman runs the household, and gives the orders, and the man does what he’s told.”

“I suppose we could try that, if you wanted us to,” Jackie said dubiously, “but it doesn’t sound like it would tell you much.”

“No, you’re right. I’m talking about a much more dramatic change of status. This programme would require you both to adopt new roles, and play them 24-7 for a while.”

“What roles?” I asked. “Come on, Bill, tell us the worst.”

He took a deep breath. “Dan, you would become Jackie’s maid, her *female*, uniformed maid. Jackie, you would be Dan’s mistress and employer.”

There was silence. Jackie and I looked at each other. I was about to protest, vehemently, when she spoke.

“How would it work?” she asked, hoarsely.

“First of all, let me stress that everything would be totally anonymous. I’m the only person in the programme who would know who you really are. We would rent a house for you somewhere where nobody knows either of you. Jackie would carry on at work as normal; she’d just be going home to the rented house while her husband was ‘away’.

“Dan, you would be thoroughly disguised as the live-in maid. You wouldn’t have to go out if you didn’t want to, though you might have to interact with callers like the postman and the grocery delivery driver. You’d be responsible for all cleaning, laundry and cooking in the household, and you’d have to do anything else your mistress asks you to do. Jackie, you’d be in charge. You’d have to make sure that your maid is doing her job properly and take appropriate action if she doesn’t.”

“How long would you want us to do this for?” I asked.

I couldn’t imagine agreeing to this ridiculous idea, but I thought we might as well hear all the details before saying no.

“Let me run you through Stage 1 of the programme. On the first day you’d check in to a facility we’re using for the project. It’s called ‘Transformations’. They have all the necessary equipment and skills. During that first week they’ll teach you everything you need to know to present yourself as a convincing woman: make-up, hair styling, etc, but also movement, speech, mannerisms, gestures, and so on. They’ll have all the clothes you’ll need: underwear, nightwear, maid uniforms, shoes, casual dresses, and so on. More importantly, they’ll also teach you how to be a maid: housekeeping skills, obviously, but also how to behave as a servant.

“You will then join your mistress at her rented house and serve as her housemaid for three weeks. You both have to stay in your roles throughout that period, preferably with no ‘time-outs’, though we won’t be *too* rigid about that. As your sponsor, I will come by occasionally, probably unannounced, to see how you’re getting on.”

“To check up on us, you mean,” Jackie said.

“If you like,” he agreed. “Anyway we’ll ask you both to record a daily diary of your feelings in your role, and fill in a questionnaire every week. For example, do you find yourselves *becoming* your roles at all, or are you always aware you’re play-acting? Dan, do you feel that by living as a maid you’re becoming *submissive*? Jackie, are you getting any pleasure out of ordering your maid around? That is, are you *dominating*, becoming a dominatrix? And if that domme-sub relationship does develop, what can you tell us about your feelings during the process? This is the really key data we need.”

"I assume the university would pay our expenses?" I said.

"Yes, indeed... though there is a small catch. 'Transformations' is expensive, and then there's the rented accommodation..."

"And her clothes," Jackie said, indicating me with a laugh. *Her?*

"Actually they won't be that expensive – she'll be a poor working-class woman, remember. She wouldn't be able to afford anything fancy."

They both chuckled. I didn't see what was so funny.

"So as an incentive to stay the course, you'll have to pay for everything as you go along. All your expenses will be reimbursed eventually – I promise! – provided you finish the four weeks, fill in all the questionnaires, and give us good feedback in your diaries."

Bill paused again, and Jackie and I chewed it over. The financial incentive was irrelevant to me, of course. I had no idea how much we'd lose if we dropped out early or didn't provide any data, but I was prepared to bet that I made enough in half a day to pay for everything. I had much more serious concerns.

"I'm not happy about this," I began. "I don't like the idea of my wife seeing me dressed as a woman for a month."

"Are you afraid I'll lose my respect for you?" Jackie said. "Come on, babe, you know me better than that. I'll always know you're my big hunky hubby, however you're dressed or acting."

"I guess so," I said, doubtfully. "But we've never been in a situation like this. You don't know how you'll feel..."

"Are you afraid I'm going to turn into some sort of tyrant and treat you horribly?"

I smiled. "No, I don't think that's in your nature. Are there any other rules, Bill?"

"Such as what?"

"Well, can we still sleep together, for instance?"

"Absolutely. The *only* rule is that what Mistress says, goes. If she wants her maid in her bed – or doesn't – that's her decision."

"Oh, I'm looking forward to taking my sweet little maid to bed," Jackie said eagerly.

"Don't forget, this isn't about Dan cross-dressing or learning house-keeping skills," Bill continued. "That's entirely incidental. The maid-mistress role-play is just a *device* to put one of you in a submissive position and the other in a dominant role. There are lots of other character combinations we could use. This is just the most common in real *domme-sub* relationships. Also, we could just as easily do it the other way round with Jackie as the maid, but it's more informative this way because, in general, it's more common for husbands to be dominant. The objective is to explore how a well-balanced real-life relationship responds to

counter-cultural *domme-sub* role play. We want to see what changes, if anything. I guess there is *some* risk to your relationship; that something might get lost between you; but I think it's much more likely you'll *gain* something; a more intimate knowledge of each other, new pleasures, who knows?"

"Sorry, I don't think so, Bill," I began. "This isn't my kind of thing at all. It's potentially *really* embarrassing; and – to put it bluntly – I don't see what's in it for me for the effort I'd have to put in."

Bill was clearly disappointed and was trying to marshal a counter-argument, when Jackie came in.

"But we shouldn't rush a decision like this," she said. "We might get something out of it, as well as helping you out, Bill. Leave it with us. We'll get back to you tomorrow."

"Yes, OK," he said, hopefully. "I quite understand. It's a big commitment. You need to talk it over – just the two of you."

"By the way," Jackie said, "if this is just Stage 1, what is Stage 2?"

"I'll tell you that if you finish Stage 1," Bill said.

He left shortly afterwards.

* * *

"That was a good idea, to tell him we needed to talk privately," I said when we were alone. "We've already shown him we're not keen; now we can let him down gently."

"So you really don't want to do it?" Jackie said, to my surprise.

"Of course, I don't want to do it! The whole idea is bloody mad!"

"We shouldn't just dismiss it out of hand," she said. "It could be fun, and..."

"I'm not parading around in a maid's uniform for him or anybody else!" I fumed. "*And if you think...*"

"Please don't shout at me," she interrupted in a quiet voice.

"I'm not shouting!"

"You are, actually... and you never used to."

I *was* shouting. I shut up and sat down.

"When did I become so short-tempered?" I asked in a small voice.

"It's been coming on for a while now, and other people have noticed. Suzy mentioned it when I spoke to her on the phone yesterday."

God! My secretary was complaining about me to my wife! This could be serious...

Jackie was watching me carefully.

"So are you beginning to get it?" she asked, sympathetically.

"I think you may be right," I sighed. "I may be a little stressed."

"So what should we do about it? You need a proper rest. No investment planning and no client worries."

"Well, I *should* take a sabbatical, I suppose..."

"And what do you want to do? You can't just sit around at home reading newspapers and financial magazines. That would be even worse. You'll just get frustrated because you can't do anything financial whiz-kiddy."

"Could we go away somewhere? World cruise? Wine tour?"

"*You* could, but you know I can't come with you at the moment. I have hardly any leave left and my research is at a crucial stage. I can't afford to be away for more than a week or so."

"Well I'm not going anywhere without you," I said firmly. "Maybe I could write a book?"

"What on? And anyway it would hardly be a rest, would it? You need something mindless, to de-stress."

"I could build something here at home – a gazebo, a patio, a swimming pool."

"You? Hah!"

She was right. I wasn't completely impractical, but neither of us could see me doing carpentry or brick-laying.

"All right," I sighed. "You obviously think we should consider Bill's barmy idea, don't you? I *hate* the idea of being anybody's maid, even yours."

"It's only role play, to see how the unfamiliar situation makes us feel. We don't have to take it too seriously." She could see I wasn't convinced. "We can always break character – as long as Bill doesn't find out. I don't really care about his research project. I just want you to be doing something restful."

"But I don't see how it would help with my stress anyway. Why would cooking and cleaning be *restful*?"

"Well it wouldn't be *physically*, obviously," she agreed, "but the switch from hard mental work with little exercise to hard *physical* work and virtually no mental stress might be exactly what you need."

"It will be really embarrassing..."

“Why? No one will see you as a maid except for me and Bill, and we promise not to laugh, well, not very often anyway.” She grinned.

“What about the people at Transformations?”

“But they won’t know who you are, and you’ll never see any of them again once it’s all over.”

She could tell I was hesitating, and rushed to seize her advantage.

“I really think this would be good for you, Dan,” she said, “not the cross-dressing – frankly, that’s neither here nor there – but a month or so off with no stress, no giving orders, no responsibility. And you might even find household chores therapeutic!” She laughed. “It would certainly help *my* stress levels if I no longer have to do my share of the housework on top of ten-hour days at work. Come to think of it, I don’t know why we don’t have a maid already. It’s not like we can’t afford it.”

I could see that my wife was intrigued by the whole daft project. If she really wanted to do this I knew I’d end up giving in anyway. I might as well save us all some time. I sighed.

“Well, I could never refuse you anything,” I said. Then a thought occurred. “But doesn’t that mean I’m a pussy-whipped submissive already? Doesn’t that rule us out of the programme before we start?”

“You? Pussy-whipped? As if!” Jackie snorted. “I can never get you to do anything you *really* don’t want to do.”

“Oh, okay, I’ll go along with it,” I said. “I guess it might be fun.” Jackie whooped. “I’ll let them know at the office that I’ll begin my sabbatical in July. Does that work for you?”

She nodded happily.

May - June

I arranged for my sabbatical to begin at the end of June, returning on the first Monday in October. This would work well as the summer months were always fairly quiet in my business. I notified my clients that I would be away and that my assistant would be available if they needed anything. She would e-mail me all the important investment news and research, and I told her she could text me if she needed to, but only in an emergency. I couldn’t even guarantee I would see e-mails. (Jackie would have her laptop of course, but a maid couldn’t ask to use her mistress’s computer!)

Jackie took all my measurements so that Transformations could start putting my wardrobe together. At Bill’s suggestion I stopped getting haircuts so that they could do my hair in a feminine fashion and I could avoid having to wear a wig.

Otherwise I wasn’t required to do much else to prepare for the Project over the next few weeks, except that Jackie insisted I improve my cooking. She was an excellent cook and loved to prepare most of our meals at home. Knowing my culinary skills all too well, she wasn’t confident that the Transformations maid training would be enough, and she didn’t want to

have to eat beans on toast for three weeks. Under her instruction, by the start of the sabbatical I was able to prepare a dozen of her favourite meals.

Week 1 - Sunday

So on the Sunday before my training week was to begin I cooked lunch for Jackie, Bill and myself. He gave us our final briefing as we ate.

“I’ll drop you off at Transformations later this afternoon. Remember that from the moment you walk in through the door you’ll be Nancy.”

“Who?”

“Oh, didn’t I tell you?” Jackie grinned. “Bill asked me a couple of weeks ago what I wanted my maid to be called and I chose Nancy.”

“But I don’t like the name Nancy! Don’t I get a say in this?”

“Of course not. No one ever gets to choose their own name, do they?” Jackie said. “And we can hardly ask your Mum and Dad, can we?”

“They always said they would have called me Miriam, if I’d been a girl,” I mused. “I suppose even Nancy’s better than that. But I’d like to be... How about, *Alexandra*?”

“That’s hardly an appropriate name for a maid!” Jackie said. “It’s much too posh.”

Bill agreed and added, “Anyway the documentation has already been completed in the name, Nancy Potts, so I’m afraid you’re stuck with it.”

“Nancy Potts? God, I’ll sound like a character from *Coronation Street* or *EastEnders*!”

“If I might continue?” he said, impatiently. “We’re due at Transformations at four o’clock. Your consultants will begin your makeover today and continue tomorrow. You will then have four days of training. I will pick you up on Saturday afternoon and take you over to your mistress’s new home. You’ll then have to get it ready for her. Apparently it hasn’t been occupied for months, so it will need a good clean. Mistress will arrive on Sunday evening and you will serve her a three-course meal. If you give me a shopping list, I’ll make sure the house is well stocked.”

“That will be nice,” Jackie said. “Nancy’s getting to be a very good cook.”

Bill smiled. “You don’t need to pack any clothes, and please leave your phone and wallet at home here. You won’t need a coat either. Everything Nancy needs will be provided.”

He paused. “Look, I won’t be able to say this once you’re both ‘in role’, so to speak, but thanks for doing this. They confirmed the next year’s funding. You’ve saved my bacon.”

So that’s all right then.

* * *

Transformations was a big converted Manor House on the outskirts of the town, about a half-hour drive from where we lived. We were welcomed by a very attractive young receptionist. I wondered whether she *was* actually a she, but there was no sign of maleness in either her slim body or her voice.

“Nice to see you again, Professor,” she said to Bill, “and this must be Nancy? Hello, I’m Angela.”

Bill confirmed my identity. It felt really odd being introduced with a woman’s name. He signed me in, leaving me with no need to say or do anything. I realised that standing around, watching my ‘betters’ making decisions for me and waiting for instructions, was going to be my life for the next month. Part of me wanted to protest at being treated like a non-person, but another part was thinking it might actually be quite restful, as Jackie had said. I wouldn’t need to make any plans or decisions. I wouldn’t need to tell anyone what to do, or how to do it – which I felt I’d been doing all my life. The downside would be that people would be telling *me* what to do, but I could live with that as it would only be Jackie.

“Now, Nancy,” Angela said, “go into the Ladies’ room over there, take all your clothes off – I mean, *everything* – and put these on.”

She handed me a shopping bag from a large department store. I could see something pink inside.

“Put your own clothes in the bag and bring it back to me,” she added.

It seemed I was wrong. I was going to be ordered around by *everyone* in my new life, even junior support staff. I wasn’t used to that. As a Partner in an Investment Bank, I was usually the one doing the ordering around. This was going to be hard to take.

Bill could see from my face what I was thinking. He led me away from the receptionist.

“Look, Dan, I appreciate how hard this is going to be for you,” he said, quietly. “But your reactions to this kind of treatment are key. They’re what we really need to understand. *Please* just go along with it. You can vent your spleen in your daily diary. Write down *exactly* what you feel. It’ll be invaluable data.”

I nodded and made my way to the Ladies’ and began to strip. The bag contained a pair of pink knickers, a cheap pink dressing gown of the kind favoured by middle-aged women, and a pair of pink slippers. I put them all on and looked at myself in the mirror. With my shaggy man’s haircut, five o’clock shadow, and hairy chest and legs, I looked like an idiot. I sighed, stuffed my men’s clothes in the bag, and returned to Reception.

Bill got up to greet me and reached for the shopping bag. He was clearly struggling to stop himself laughing out loud at the sight of me.

“I’ll see these get back to your house,” he said.

“Don’t forget his watch, Professor,” said Angela.

I took off my expensive men's watch and handed it to Bill. He dropped it in the bag.

"Okay, I'll say goodbye now, Nancy. See you on Saturday."

Sadly, I watched him go, leaving me to an uncertain fate. I had no cash, no credit cards, no phone, and no ID as my male self. I wondered how he and Jackie would feel if I said I'd changed my mind.

* * *

Angela took me in to meet my 'consultant'. She was a big-boned woman called Mrs McLaughlin. I was much less certain of her gender than Angela's, but all her mannerisms and gestures were completely feminine. If she *was* a beneficiary of Transformations' services herself, they must be *very* good.

"I usually ask my clients to call me Ingrid," she said, in a rich contralto which didn't rule out her being either sex, "but you are to be a housemaid, I understand, so we'd better stick to 'Mrs McLaughlin'. It wouldn't do to let someone in your position get too familiar."

She walked around me, prodding and poking, and peering very closely at my face.

"Professor Hawkins already gave me all your measurements, of course, but I find it's easier to decide on the best transformation – the best physical type – when I can examine the subject closely in person," she explained.

She reached out and traced the contours of my features with her big hands, muttering 'yes, yes' and 'hmm' as she prodded. Finally she gave her assessment.

"You have a good oval face – not too strongly masculine. You have average, unlined features. You don't have a large nose or a pronounced supraorbital ridge. Yes, I'm satisfied we can make you a completely convincing woman, but I'm afraid you'll have to give up all hope of being young and pretty..."

"I never held out any hope of that!" I said.

"Oh yes, I was forgetting you're not the usual type of client we get here..."

I detected that remark might have been slightly tongue-in-cheek, but I couldn't be bothered trying to persuade her that I was only doing this for 'scientific research'. *Just let it go*, I told myself. That was hardly the worst thing I was going to have to put up with over the next four weeks.

"Anyway," she continued, "you don't have an over-masculine face or features, but with hair and make-up appropriate for a housemaid, you'll still look middle-aged. How old are you anyway?"

"Thirty-four."

"Well, you might get away with early forties, I suppose; thirty-nine, maybe. Being older will help with your voice too. It's not too deep, so as long as you speak softly it will easily pass for

that of a middle-aged woman, but really not for a young girl. The other problem is your figure, of course.”

“I thought I was slim enough to have quite a decent figure as a woman?” I said.

“So you are, but it’s all about proportions. Typically, a man has broader shoulders and a thicker waist than a woman of the same height, even if he has no excess fat at all round his tummy and buttocks. So we’ll have to pad you out around the hips, thighs and bottom to compensate for the breadth of your shoulders.

“You’ll need something to pinch in your waist too, to give you a feminine ‘hourglass’ shape. If we don’t do all that, your overall figure will look unbalanced and strange for a woman and would attract unwanted attention. Then if anyone were to look at you carefully for too long, they’d soon work out you were a man in drag. Sadly the padding you’ll need will make you a little plump, and we’ll have to choose breast forms to match, of course. I think you can expect to be a generous size 16, maybe 18.”

I wasn’t sure exactly what that meant, but I knew Jackie was a size 8. So not just a maid then, but a middle-aged, *fat* maid. Terrific! But why would I care? Apart from the people here at Transformations, the only people who will see me will be Jackie and Bill. No doubt they’ll have a good laugh at me, but I’ll get over it. Probably.

* * *

The rest of Sunday was a nightmare. I was led, still wearing my panties, slippers and dressing gown, to a salon where a big, bluff no-nonsense woman called Vera gave me an all-over waxing, including my face and neck. Although she kindly started me off with a quadruple Jack Daniels to render me inert, it was still the worst pain I can remember. She wiped away several spots of blood. The soothing lotion she rubbed in afterwards helped a little.

After the waxing Mrs McLaughlin came to collect me and took me into a dark room with a lot of high-tech equipment. She then went next door to the control room. I had to stand stock still on a dais – naked – while several cameras on gantries flashed and took photographs from all sides. When they had finished she signalled me to put my clothes back on and join her at the computer terminal in the next room. I saw what looked like a 3D image of my body with red and green sections highlighted. She was twiddling with various knobs.

“This enables us to see how much padding you will need to approximate a convincing feminine figure. It also programmes the 3D printer to make the prosthetics.”

A huge machine on the other side of the room started whirring. A strange plasticky smell filled the air. After a couple of minutes Mrs McLaughlin went over to the machine and collected a number of strangely-shaped, flesh-coloured objects from its output tray.

“I’ll start with your breasts, I think,” she said, approaching me with two huge fleshy mounds. “That will get you started feeling like a woman.”

She had me lie down on my back on a massage bed.

“Now hold very still. I’m using medical adhesive and it’s best if it only goes where it’s supposed to.”

She painted my chest and the back of the first form. Then she pressed it onto me. It was still warm from the 3D printer. She leant down hard with all her weight for a count of sixty. I thought she was going to crack my ribs. Then she repeated the exercise with the other form.

“Right, you need to stay still for another five minutes to let the adhesive set. Then you can put on your first bra.”

Oh joy.

“I assume it *is* your first?” she said, still sceptical.

“It certainly is!”

“If you say so, Nancy.”

When she eventually allowed me to move, I tried to sit up and was astonished at the weight on my chest. Mrs McLaughlin laughed and hastened to wrap a huge bra around me.

“Here you are. You’ll need this to support their weight, and it will prevent the forms from tearing your chest. Be careful; your skin will rip before the adhesive will break.”

It was a plain white bra, not especially frilly or sexy, presumably the kind a middle-aged, working-class woman would wear. I put my arms through the shoulder straps. She fastened the clasp behind me and I immediately felt more comfortable as the bra transferred the weight of my new breasts from the skin of my chest to my shoulders.

“Now for your abdominal prosthesis. That means the padding for your hips, thighs and buttocks.”

“I know what ‘abdominal’ means,” I snapped. “I was at Cambridge; I know lots of long words.”

“*You* might have been, dear, but *Nancy* certainly wasn’t. You’re going to have to start hiding your elite education, you know, and I’m afraid you’ll have to get used to people talking down to you. Now step into this.”

The ‘abdominal prosthesis’ was like a pair of plastic running shorts, but flesh-coloured, and heavily padded, round the tummy, hips and bottom. The mock blubber in the thighs and buttocks was contoured to resemble a middle-aged woman’s flab, complete with cellulite. When I reached to pull it up, I found it was really heavy, like the breasts. The fleshy parts wobbled realistically. Mrs McLaughlin noticed me struggling.

“The prostheses are designed to weigh the same as real flesh,” she said. “That way the wearer is forced to move as he’d have to if they were actually part of him. I’m afraid Nancy won’t be running and jumping about much. Now the next part is tricky. Let me help you adjust yourself. You might find this a little uncomfortable at first, but you’ll soon get used to it.”

And without the slightest sign of embarrassment – on her part, at least – she reached inside the tight-fitting padded panties and manoeuvred my wedding tackle into a special compartment that went down between my legs. It certainly *was* uncomfortable. She manoeuvred my testicles back up into the cavities from which they had descended twenty years ago. Then she pushed my penis into what felt like a rigid tube, which was then anchored down between my legs.

“You appreciate you’ll have to sit down to use the toilet now, like any woman,” she said. “But you should find the apertures in the prosthesis are correctly aligned with yours, so ‘doing your business’ should all feel quite natural. Your member now connects directly to your vagina, but be careful. You no longer have the same ‘directional control’ a man has. You’re likely to spray a little until you get used to it. Make sure you wipe thoroughly afterwards.”

Ye Gods, is there no end to the embarrassment of this stupid role-playing?

“We usually recommend gluing this on with a special paste that prevents perspiration, but I understand that Professor Hawkins and your Mistress don’t want that for the moment. So you will get a little sweaty, and you’ll have to take it off every few days and clean yourself up. Otherwise you could develop a nasty rash.”

I would be perfectly happy to divest myself of this hideous thing as often as possible. She stood back to admire her handiwork.

“That looks pretty good. But now you look like a naked woman down there. You’d better put some knickers on. These should fit you perfectly.”

She handed me a pair of panties that matched my bra. I put them on and when I looked in the mirror now, I didn’t look quite so stupid. I had all the appropriate female attributes and none of the male ones. Beneath my little feminine pot belly I was totally flat. My hairless body was clothed in well-fitting lingerie, though ‘lingerie’ was a poor choice of word. My bra and knickers were plain and utilitarian, about as unsexy as female underwear could be.

I put my dressing gown and slippers back on. Mrs McLaughlin looked up at the clock on the clinic wall. It showed nine p.m. By force of habit I looked down to check it against my own watch – accurate to a second a year – but of course it was no longer on my wrist.

“I think that’s enough for today,” she said. “I’ll show you to your room. You can call down to the kitchen for some supper if you like, but they won’t let you order anything too heavy. You have to learn to eat like a woman now, Nancy. Tomorrow: hair, make-up and clothes.”

And all this while being called ‘Nancy’ and treated like a servant, a second-class citizen. But there was one ironic compensation: I hated it! So I couldn’t be a latent submissive, could I? Let alone an incipient cross-dresser.

* * *

I was shown to a bedroom which was pleasant enough. It was a bed-sit, much like student accommodation or a room at the Premier Inn or Travelodge, except that it had a distinctly feminine feel to it: soft pastel colours; frilly duvet; a small *en suite* with a wide range of herbal

bath salts; and a toilet seat that wouldn't go up. Presumably the management wanted me to sit down to do my business, rather than point and shoot at a much-reduced target, not that I had any choice while wearing this prosthesis.

The wardrobe contained some cheap and probably second-hand dresses, a couple of plain skirts and tops, a dark blue cardigan, and some smart and clearly new maid's uniforms: two grey, one pink and one black. All of them had long or three-quarter length sleeves, which would mean the thickness of my arms and my masculine muscles would always be concealed.

On the floor of the wardrobe were two pairs of plain black patent leather shoes in what I guessed would be my size, one lace-up and one 'Mary Jane'-style with a strap. Both had one-inch heels. There was also a pair of white ladies' sneakers.

The chest of drawers contained plain bras and knickers (mostly white and much like the ones I was wearing); underslips; several pairs of pantyhose, tights, etc, in black and nude; two strange-looking belt-like garments, one black and one cream; and a couple of half-aprons, presumably for use with the maid's uniforms.

I wasn't tempted to explore further, let alone to experiment. That could wait until I was actually instructed to wear any of the stuff. As far as I could see there were no pants, not even women's slacks. Obviously I was supposed to stick to dresses and skirts for the duration.

I took off the stupid pink dressing gown and hung it up on a hook on the back of the door. I considered taking off my bra and knickers too, but eventually decided to leave them on. I was more comfortable with the bra taking the unaccustomed load off my chest and shoulders, and the panties held in all my new unwanted flab tightly. I would change them in the morning after a shower. A cotton nightdress, pink as usual, and floral, had been laid across the bed. No point in fighting it. I put it on over my lingerie and slumped down in the chair beside the bed.

A plain ladies' watch was on the nightstand. I put it on. I'd felt naked without a watch. Then I saw a large format, spiral-bound diary, which, as promised, Bill had left for me to record my feelings in each night. I decided to start right away.

Nancy's Diary – Week 1, Sunday

Well the first day was utterly horrible. They made me feel a total idiot, dressing me in female underclothes and calling me 'Nancy' while I still looked completely like a man. And I didn't take to that McLaughlin woman at all. (I assume she doesn't get to see anything I write, Bill?) She clearly doesn't believe that my 'transformation' is all in the name of science. She must think that I'm either a genuine transsexual, in denial, or a deluded fantasist. Well fuck her! I have nothing to prove to her, and as long as she does a good job, I don't care. I'll never see her or anyone else here again after this.

I have to say, with regard to the domme-sub thing, I'm not feeling it yet. I don't feel submissive at all – even though everyone here is treating me like I'm stupid and uneducated – I just feel angry. Presumably because for most of my adult life I've been treated with respect, and now everyone is looking down at me. But of course, they don't know me, and arguably they're only

doing this to help me get into character, so perhaps I should give them a break. I guess I shouldn't have told the McLaughlin woman I was at Cambridge.

Maybe the worst of this is that today was just the first day of being separated from Jackie and sleeping alone in a strange bed. It's like the first day of boarding school and I miss my wife, lover, best friend. Perhaps I'm just lonely, or homesick, or something. Stressed, maybe? As Jackie said?

If I had to summarise my feelings, it would be anger and resentment. At this point I can't imagine putting up with this for one week, let alone four.

Is this the sort of thing you wanted in my diary, Bill?

Week 1 - Monday

A uniformed waitress (Male? Female? No idea!) woke me at seven o'clock with a glass of orange juice and a tasteless muesli-like cereal.

When I started moving and attempted to get out of bed, I nearly fell over from the unfamiliar weight distribution of my huge breasts and grossly-enhanced butt, hips and thighs. (I don't think I'll mention that in my diary. Too embarrassing.)

I hadn't attempted to remove the 'abdominal prosthesis' the previous night, partly because it seemed sensible to try and get used to it, and partly because it was too much like hard work. I resolved to take it off that night though, and get properly cleaned up.

After eating my breakfast I took a shower. I threw off my nightie, panties and bra, but didn't attempt to remove any prosthetics. Maybe I'd be lucky and they'd fall apart or melt in the hot water. A shower cap had been provided and I decided to use it – for the first time ever – as my long hair took a while to dry. Being wider now than I had been, I managed to hit my hip against the shower door, both getting in and getting out again. Fortunately I only banged my 'padding' and didn't hurt myself, but it was a sharp reminder of my new shape and unfamiliar plumpness. Naturally the prosthetics seemed to be completely waterproof.

I was told to report to Mrs McLaughlin's office downstairs by eight o'clock wearing one of my ordinary dresses, rather than a maid's uniform, and not to forget my 'waist-cincher' – whatever that was. For the day, I decided on the only black underwear available, with control-top tights, and the Mary Janes.

For my dress I chose a rather shapeless floral number. Unfortunately it was too tight around the waist and I couldn't get it to fasten. Neither of the other dresses was any better.

Then I remembered the 'waist-cincher' instruction, presumably referring to the two belt-like garments in my lingerie drawer. I took out the cream-coloured one and wrapped it around myself. I pulled the laces as tight as I dared and tied them off.

When I put the dress back on, the fiendish apparatus showed all too clearly through the thin material of my dress. So I took the dress off again and put on an underslip. The cincher's

lumps were now smoothed over. I put the dress on again and with some difficulty zipped myself up. Success!

* * *

Mrs McLaughlin greeted me briskly. "Morning, Nancy. I trust you slept well?" She gave me no time to answer but quickly continued, "That dress looks very nice on you, dear. Come along now. Lots to do today!"

She rushed off along the corridor from her office in the opposite direction from where we had been the previous day. I followed, slightly more slowly. The one-inch heels weren't too challenging, but I had never worn heels of any kind before. Also I was finding the jiggling of my boobs and the sideways motion of my buttocks disconcerting. When I tried to match Mrs McLaughlin's pace, I found my enhanced rear swaying disturbingly from side to side.

The room she led me into turned out to be a hairdressing salon with all the usual fittings: swivel chairs in front of mirrors; batteries of dyes and setting solutions; racks of curlers of various sizes; scissors and clippers; and tall, free-standing hair dryers.

Mrs McLaughlin introduced me to a cheery, middle-aged lady called Sharon, who I was told would be looking after my hair and make-up.

"Just a little off the top, please," I said, in a pathetic attempt at humour.

Sharon smiled. "Sorry, love, you're in for the full treatment today. Trim, tint and perm."

"What? Why?"

Mrs McLaughlin stepped in. "As I explained yesterday, we think your best chance of being convincing will be to make you a slightly overweight, lower-class woman in her early forties. At that age, you would expect to have noticeably greying hair, and most women would use a little tint. Now, Nancy can't afford an expensive hairdo, or the frequent maintenance that would entail..."

"...So we're giving you a cheap, semi-permanent tint," finished Sharon. "It will be a bit obvious, I'm afraid, but that fits in with your character too. Tints of this kind can last up to twenty washes on average, slowly fading away every time you shampoo your hair."

"But why a *perm*?" I asked.

"Again, it fits the character," said Mrs McLaughlin, getting up to leave.

"And it will frame your face better and make you look more feminine," added Sharon. "Don't let it get wet for at least the next forty-eight hours, and always wear a headscarf or a hat when you're outdoors, if it looks like it might rain."

I still didn't see why it was so important that I be 'completely convincing', as Mrs McLaughlin had put it yesterday, when the only people I would be seeing would be Bill and Jackie, but at

this point Sharon pushed my head down over the basin, giving me no further chance to protest. It was no surprise to learn that I was going to be blonde.

* * *

While I was sitting there with curlers in, Sharon painted my nails a bright red. Then she began my make-up.

“I’m going to do the bare minimum,” she said, “to keep it simple for you, and anyway a cleaning lady wouldn’t bother with much make-up when she’s working. I’ll explain everything I do as I go along, and then I’ll clean it all off and you can do it again yourself.

That whole exercise took well over an hour. I might be a natural at mastering complex financial instruments, but when it came to make-up, it turns out I’m a slow learner. But the process was quite enjoyable. She also showed me how to do bolder make-up for going out in the evening. Privately I was determined that would never happen.

When she was eventually satisfied that I had mastered ‘Cleaning Lady Make-up 101’, Sharon took out my curlers and brushed my hair.

“You realise you’ll need to put curlers in every night?” she said. “I hope you were watching how I did it.”

My heart sank. “I’m sure I’ll manage,” I said.

“I’ll give you a sleep bonnet to wear over them. Otherwise a curler could catch on your bedclothes and rip your hair out.”

Then she called Mrs McLaughlin. When she returned the two women studied me carefully.

“I think we’ll have to give you glasses,” Mrs McLaughlin said. Sharon concurred.

“But I have 20-20 vision.”

“I mean, as part of your disguise. Despite everything you still look too young.”

“And pretty,” added Sharon, with a smile.

“Put these on,” said Mrs McLaughlin, reaching for a pair of ladies’ glasses from a box on a nearby shelf. “Don’t worry – they’re plain glass. They’ll make you look older and conceal your features better. People look different wearing glasses; they’re like a mask. So it’s even less likely you’ll be recognised if you do bump into someone you know.”

I put the glasses on. They both nodded.

“Right,” she continued. “Time to get you over to the training centre. You *look* like a woman now, but we still have to teach you to *move* like a woman.”

* * *

We made our way out of a side entrance to an adjacent building and into a large open room. It had a polished wood-tiled floor and a high ceiling. It reminded me of my old school's gymnasium, minus the wall bars and exercise equipment. There were white lines painted on the floor too, but they weren't for badminton or basketball. They included footprints and I guessed they were the steps for various ballroom dances. A long trestle table stood against the wall at one end, with various strange-looking items of equipment scattered along its surface.

A tall thin woman approached us. She looked even more like a schoolmistress than Mrs McLaughlin.

"You must be Nancy," she said.

Her manner was a little brusque, and she made no attempt to shake hands.

"This is Miss Parr, Nancy," said Mrs McLaughlin. "I'll leave you in her capable hands."

"Thank you, Ingrid," Miss Parr said. "I understand I have the rest of the day to teach her to move like a lady?"

"Not a *lady*, actually, Alice. Just a female. Nancy is going to be a housemaid."

"Ah, one of *those*. Well, that will be a little easier."

I was getting used to Transformations staff making assumptions regarding my motives for this silly exercise. That didn't stop my anger rising again, but nothing would be gained by giving vent to my feelings, so I kept quiet. Neither woman showed any sign of noticing my sullen demeanour. Or, more likely, they didn't care – I wasn't actually the paying client, that was Bill.

"I'll check back with you later in the day," said Mrs McLaughlin, and left me with my new instructor.

"Now then, Nancy," Miss Parr began, indicating that I should sit down on one of the hard-back chairs in front of the table. "We're going to begin with your walk. I'm sure you know that men and women walk differently. There are several reasons for this, some physiological, some psychological. Firstly, the angle the femur makes with the pelvis is significant. The average woman's pelvis, being much wider for her height than the average man's, makes a greater angle to the femur. As a result, a woman's gait is noticeably different from a man's.

"Secondly: weight distribution. Women have a lower centre of gravity as well as wider hips. This causes their feet to point naturally towards one another, and thus a slight horizontal swaying motion. A man's centre of mass is higher, and his tapering hips and protruding genitalia cause the male feet naturally to point *outwards* from the body, restricting horizontal movement."

This was actually quite interesting, though I wasn't sure how it was going to help me.

“Thirdly: body shape. A woman with substantial breasts – like you,” she chuckled, “– has to adjust her *posture* to keep her centre of gravity above her hips.”

It was true; I had realised I was now leaning back slightly to compensate for the additional weight on my chest – though not as far as I would have had to if it weren’t for the compensating weight of my pudgy thighs and buttocks.

“Typically,” Miss Parr continued, “a woman arches her back, puts her weight on the front of her feet, pulls her shoulders back, and so on. Also, women have more body fat and less muscle; they have slimmer limbs, narrower shoulders and waists, and on average they are shorter than men and so take shorter strides. A woman’s hips naturally move from side to side more, because her hips are wider apart than those of a male of the same height. All these factors result in a different walk.”

She saw I was about to interrupt, and said quickly, “I see you’re wondering how this can help you make a more convincing female impersonation. My point is, it’s not actually difficult to change your gait once you’re aware of all these physical differences. But it takes practice and self-discipline, which we’re going to work on today.”

I finally got a word in. “You also mentioned *psychological* reasons for the difference between how men and women move?”

She smiled. “Yes, part of it is that both men and women sometimes walk in a way designed to attract the opposite sex; men swagger, women *sashay* - hips swinging, chest out. This may be conscious or unconscious. But I don’t think that’s something you need to be thinking about, is it?”

I glowered. “Definitely not. I’m not interested in attracting *anyone* – male or female.”

“Right, now let’s do some walking practice. You can start with the shoes you have on. One-inch heels, aren’t they? You’ve probably already noticed that you have to walk differently in heels, but the adjustments you have to make will all help you walk like a woman. Up to a point, the higher the heel, the more you have to *consciously* adjust your gait. We’ll be trying some higher heels later on.”

She led me over to the middle of the hall and positioned me on a white square on the floor. A straight white line led off the square towards another one at the other end of the hall.

“Now I want you to walk along the line to the far end. Don’t try too hard to be feminine. First, let’s just see how your new padding and prostheses affect your gait. Remember: shoulders back, chest out.”

I set off. She darted around me, sometimes behind, sometimes to my side. I realised she was filming me on a small hand-held video camera. To keep my balance, I was walking more slowly than I was used to. I found I was holding my hands still, not swinging them as I would have before. I wasn’t sure how my butt was moving, but I definitely felt the skirt of my dress swishing from side to side. When I reached the end of the hall, I stopped and turned around for her comments.

“Good. Now back again to where you started, but this time focus on pointing your toes. Try to place each foot on the white line. Allow a little more swivel to your hips.”

I set off again, trying to do as she said. I was watching the white line intently and placing each foot on it. This was quite difficult as my bust was big enough that I couldn't actually see my feet, only the places where I intended to put them when I – and they – got there. It felt strange, like I was almost crossing my legs over one another, but I could definitely feel my rear swinging now. It almost felt like a parody of a woman's walk, like I was a drag queen, mincing along for laughs. I stopped again back by the table.

“That was better, but you need to shorten your stride; there's no rush. You probably felt like you were overdoing the 'girliness', didn't you?”

I nodded glumly.

“Well, you were, but not by much. For the moment, you need to keep doing it like that. Once the new movements become ingrained in your muscle memory, you'll be able to dial it back naturally. You do seem to be getting comfortable in your heels, which is very good. It's important that you get the walk right and that it becomes instinctive. As a maid you'll be wearing flats much of the time. If walking like a woman hasn't become instinctive, you might regress to a male gait when you're in flats.”

She gave me a handbag.

“OK, again, but this time I want you to carry this in the crook of your arm. Tuck your elbows in toward your waist, hold your forearms parallel to the floor, and let your hands fall loosely from the wrist. Cut the arm-swinging out completely.”

After a couple more lengths she replaced the handbag with a tea tray laden with crockery. Now I couldn't swing my arms at all and had to swing my hips a lot to keep the tray level.

And so the day continued. I was surprised how tiring all this walking was, but I suppose I now had to carry a lot more weight than I was used to. We took a break for coffee at about eleven, after which I had to repeat all the exercises wearing a headscarf and an outdoor coat.

By lunchtime I was starting to get it. With this moderate success my sullen resentment of my situation had started to evaporate. Miss Parr was a good teacher. She was encouraging and praised me for each little advance. The whole process reminded me a little of when Jackie and I had tried ballroom dancing lessons, and of when I struggled to learn how to hit a topspin forehand with the tennis club coach. My real successes in life had always been intellectual and that was what I was good at. Learning new *physical* movements was much more of a challenge for me and I was proud of myself for the progress I was making.

To my relief at around one o'clock Miss Parr called a halt. I collapsed gratefully into a chair, pulled my shoes off, and massaged my aching feet and calves through my stockings.

A buffet lunch was brought in for us. Miss Parr uploaded her videos to a laptop and we studied my efforts while we ate. My first few walks down the hall were deeply embarrassing. Despite

trying to follow her instructions I looked like a soldier square-bashing in drag. Miss Parr was ruthless as she pointed out what I was doing wrong.

But as we watched I could see steady improvement, and to my astonishment, by the time we reached the video of my last walk before we stopped for lunch, I realised we were watching a woman. There was no trace of maleness in the figure in the picture, in either appearance or movement. This was fascinating!

After lunch Miss Parr announced we were going to work on other aspects of feminine behaviour.

“I only have time to teach you enough gestures, mannerisms, and speech patterns to stop you from looking odd and attracting attention. Your feminine behaviour and movement will improve as time goes on. It’ll help for you to be in your role as Nancy twenty-four-seven and interacting with other people as a woman.”

I refrained from pointing out that that wasn’t going to happen. I was going to stay in our house for the entire three weeks, and the only person I was going to interact with regularly would be Jackie.

So we started working on how to sit down and stand up like a woman, the main lesson being to keep my legs together and my back straight. All men have a tendency to slouch when they sit, I learnt, probably because of the male genitalia. With my junk tightly tucked away in my prosthesis, sitting like a woman wasn’t too difficult, but it required constant concentration, and I quickly lost count of how often Miss Parr pulled me up for letting my legs drift apart.

When she was satisfied I had got the gist of these instructions she asked, “Do you want to learn to curtsy?”

“No, I don’t!” I said, appalled. Then I thought it over for a moment. “But I suppose I better had.”

The whole objective of this weird project was to find out whether playing a subservient role would make an otherwise assertive person submissive. Therefore I needed to adopt subservient behaviours to see how they made me feel. And curtsying was about as subservient as it gets – for a woman.

So she showed me how to curtsy and I had to spend twenty minutes practising. It wasn’t difficult, but it was quite a strain on my back as well as my already tender leg muscles and feet. I also had to remember to lower my head. Looking your mistress in the eye while curtsying was considered insolent, apparently. I looked forward to showing off my best curtsy to Jackie. She’d laugh her head off. I was just afraid she’d be laughing *at* me, rather than *with* me.

Miss Parr also drilled me in feminine patterns of speech. She fired lots of phrases at me, describing the day to day experiences of a woman’s life, and I had to repeat what she said exactly how she said it. I began to see how women express a thought quite differently from men. She told me women use a ‘rising inflection’ much more, almost as though they’re not confident in what they’re saying, or maybe it was that they tended to be *consultative* when

expressing an opinion, rather than *authoritative*. She also had me change the tone of my voice to inject more emotion, and illustrate my words with lots of hand movements.

I shuddered to think what some of our feminist friends would make of Miss Parr's instructions, but I supposed she was generally right. In any case, her views were fine for a humble maid like I was to be, if not for a woman CEO or a cabinet minister, or a senior manager at Atkinson Stern.

After a brief tea break, we went back to walking. Now she made me repeat all the morning's exercises in progressively higher heels. The pain in my feet, ankles and calves returned with a vengeance, but I managed. My feminine walk seemed well on the way to being ingrained, as she had said it would be.

By five o'clock when we stopped again for tea and more videos, walking had become torture. But I was now managing four-inch heels and my movements were entirely feminine. I was a little worried that I would struggle ever to walk like a man again. I wondered if Miss Parr offered exercises to *undo* what she had done.

Mrs McLaughlin turned up at about 5.30 and I was required to demonstrate what I had learned to her.

"Very good. Thank you, Alice," she said. "You may return to your room now, Nancy. I will expect you for dinner in the dining room at 7.30, where I trust you will demonstrate everything you have learned today. Change into your best dress and your highest heels and put on evening make-up."

And just like that, Mrs McLaughlin's superior attitude ruined my good humour. She made me feel like I was in prison, or perhaps a girls' boarding school. *I'm not a woman*, I insisted to myself, *and certainly not a maid!* I felt my anger and frustration returning.

Miss Parr told me to keep the high heels I had been using during the afternoon and wear the four-inchers to dinner. I put my one-inch heels back on and limped back to my room.

Nancy's Diary – Week 1, Monday

OK, Bill, the second day had its ups and downs. You want to know my feelings? Well, here goes. When I woke up and saw myself in the mirror in my nightie, with my tubby feminine figure, I had to admit I was starting to look the part, but I didn't feel female in any way, let alone feminine or submissive. Getting a woman's hairdo and makeup this morning helped a little.

A day of intensive movement training followed. It was hard, painful work, and I know my legs and feet are going to be sore tomorrow. It was also an emotional roller-coaster. I started off in a bad mood, which got worse when I realised how difficult it was going to be.

But as I began to master my lessons, and got some positive feedback from my instructor, I began to cheer up. Maybe I bonded with her and wanted to please her? She was a lot more 'user-friendly' than that ghastly McLaughlin woman, after all.

But I don't think it was that. It was more that I saw this as a challenge and was determined not to let it beat me. It was my competitiveness, not incipient submissiveness. Sorry!

Anyway, when I went down to dinner this evening, in my best dress (still fairly shabby by Jackie's standards), pantyhose, high heels, and evening make-up, I felt quite different from how I woke up this morning. I was now consciously trying to move and act like a woman, and it seemed to be working.

I am still definitely me on the inside, but like an actor at the first dress rehearsal, I am starting to 'inhabit the role'. I think I can be Nancy convincingly. It might even be fun, fooling people – not that I'm expecting to meet anyone apart from you and Jackie.

The heels restrict my movement and force me to adopt a feminine posture. My breast forms are so big and heavy that when I arch my back and thrust my chest out to help with my balance, my boobs are way out in front of me. If I were out and about, I'm sure they would attract the wrong kind of attention. I didn't think I looked too bad, for an obviously overweight middle-aged, working-class woman, that is.

Dinner with Mrs McLaughlin got me angry again. I couldn't eat much because of my girdle thing. Of course, without it I wouldn't have been able to fasten my dress, but that wasn't what annoyed me. Playing Nancy wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for Mrs McLaughlin's continual criticism.

I was tired after the day's exertions, and probably losing my concentration, and she was constantly reminding me to 'Sit with your knees together' and 'Cross your legs properly'. (Apparently, men and women cross their legs differently when they're sitting down. Who knew?)

She also got me to describe my day and corrected my way of speaking many times. 'You sound like a man. A woman would never use that word. A maid would never express her opinion that strongly.'

It was a self-service cafeteria and when I got up to get my meal, she came with me saying 'Shorter strides' and 'Put each foot directly in front of the other' and 'Bend your arms at the elbow' and 'Let your wrist hang loosely'. It never stopped. She also insisted on accompanying me to the Ladies. There it was 'You need to smile more' and 'Don't forget to freshen your lipstick'. It just went on and on.

I'm sitting at the desk writing this in my underslip, bra and panties. I glance at myself in the mirror. With my curvy figure, hairdo and make-up, and my feminised movements and mannerisms, I'm beginning to get some strange feelings – is this female sexuality?!!

I suppose I'd better put my curlers in.

But you want to know what effect this treatment is having on me? I'm still not feeling submissive, just angry. Maybe it's just another symptom of stress, but I'm genuinely beginning to doubt whether there's any point to all this, Bill. If things don't pick up tomorrow, I'm definitely going to pack it in.

Week 1 - Tuesday

I was woken at six-thirty with orange juice and toast. The waitress handed me a note from Mrs McLaughlin, which was characteristically terse:

Early start today. Meet at front entrance at seven-fifteen. Wear grey maid uniform, cardigan, outside coat, headscarf, one-inch heels, everyday make-up. Bring large handbag with cap, apron, and flats.

Why did I have to meet her at the front entrance? Was I going outside?

I wolfed down the meagre breakfast, showered, took my curlers out, brushed my hair, and put on some light make-up – a pale lipstick and just enough foundation to disguise the roughness of my skin.

Then I dressed as instructed, including the dreaded waist-cincher. The uniform dress was still quite snug, even with the girdle thing, but that was probably for the best. It would make me keep my knees together. I tried on my maid's cap to get the full effect. It was truly scary. I couldn't see Dan in the mirror at all, just some strange woman in a degrading maid's uniform.

I hurriedly snatched my cap off, untied my apron, and stuffed them both in my bag. I put on my outside coat and headscarf.

I paused to check my appearance in the wardrobe mirror. I swallowed nervously. I looked *exactly* like a plump, middle-aged, working-class woman. I felt completely humiliated, but I suppose it was a whole lot better than looking like a *man* dressed as a middle-aged, working-class woman.

When I got down to the front entrance at the appointed time, Mrs McLaughlin greeted me.

"Ah, Nancy, there you are," she said, as though I was twenty minutes late instead of two minutes early. She handed me a packed lunch in a brown paper bag and led me outside to a waiting taxi. "The driver will drop you at the offices of the cleaning company we've arranged for you to work for this week. When you get back there later, they'll call him to pick you up and bring you back here."

"Wait a minute!" I said. "I wasn't expecting to go out..."

"This is the best way for you to train to be a maid, dear," she said brusquely. "Learning by doing. You'll be fine."

With that, she turned on her heel and hurried back inside, leaving me with lots of questions. It looked as though Nancy would be out and about in the world after all. So much for my hopes of staying indoors for three weeks and only being seen by Jackie!

For a moment I considered storming back inside and demanding an end to the whole fiasco, but Jackie seemed to think this role play would be good for my stress levels, and I didn't want to let her down. I just hoped my disguise was convincing enough. Did Bill know about this? I felt betrayed, but there didn't seem to be anything I could do about it now.

I got in the car with my handbag and packed lunch, trusting that the arrangements made on my behalf would all work. Fastening the seatbelt was a challenge with my new boobs. It wasn't comfortable over or down the side of either, so I had to manoeuvre the strap to go between them, which wasn't much better.

To my relief the driver hardly looked at me twice and didn't attempt to engage me in conversation. But it was only a short journey. The car soon pulled up outside a nondescript office block. I went inside where I was greeted by a large, smiling black lady, who was dressed similarly to me. She looked about my age; that is *Nancy's* age – mid-forties, at least ten years older than Dan.

"Hi, you must be Nancy. Lovely to meet you, darling. I'm Maggie. We'll be working together this week."

We shook hands limply, girly fashion. Hers were meaty and calloused, but her manner was friendly and jovial. I liked her immediately. Maybe this week wouldn't be all bad. I wondered if she had been told I was really a man. I certainly intended to assume not. I knew my disguise was pretty much flawless, but had I learnt enough about feminine behaviour, gestures, mannerisms, speech patterns, etc? I guess I'd soon find out. If I accidentally gave Maggie any indications of my true sex, she'd be bound to let something slip sometime during the day.

"Let's get on the bus," she said. "I can tell you all about what we'll be doing today when we're on board."

And she led the way outside to where a twelve-seater minibus was waiting. *Home Counties Housekeeping Services* was stencilled on the side and back. It was about ten years old, judging by the number plate, and sorely in need of a car wash.

The back door was open and foldaway steps had been deployed. The bus was laid out with benches down each side. Maggie led the way in and I followed, mindful of yesterday's lessons on feminine movement. I had to gather up my tight skirt and raise it above my knees to climb the steps. I felt the stiffness in my ankles and calves.

To my horror, the bus was nearly full of chattering women of various races and colours, all wearing different kinds of cleaning uniforms. Only three of us were in maids' dresses. Most were in smocks and tight black trousers. Many of them paused in their conversations to give us friendly smiles. They all welcomed Maggie by name and showed unabashed curiosity about me. *Oh God, I hope my disguise is good enough!*

"This is Nancy," Maggie said. "She's new. She'll be working with me at the Sheldrake place all week."

Sheldrake? Where had I heard that name before?

A chorus of "*Hi, Nancy!*" and "*Welcome to the madhouse!*" and merry laughter rang out, then the conversations resumed. The ladies on the left-hand side of the bus moved up toward the front to leave room for Maggie and me to sit side by side. I realised that I had never known anyone like these women in my privileged life. They seemed to be unconditionally friendly.

"I usually do three half-days a week for this American family, the Sheldrakes," Maggie was saying, above the happy hubbub. "He works in the City for a big bank. I think he's on a three-year secondment, or something. She works part-time at their embassy. So they both commute into town, but she has to get their kids off to school, so she goes in much later than him and gets back earlier. You probably won't see him at all. Word of warning: they're both a bit old-fashioned; very used to having servants in the States. They'll want you to call him 'Sir' and her 'Madam'."

"Will they expect a curtsey?" I asked, mindful of my recent lessons in subservient female deportment.

The girls near to us all laughed. I hadn't realised they'd been listening.

"No, love," Maggie smiled. "Their maids might have to do that back in the States, but they know that no one curtseys in England any more, except maybe to the Queen. Anyway, as I said, I normally work only Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons. I do some light cleaning, laundry and ironing, and I cook their evening meals. But the house had been standing empty for nearly a year before they moved in last month, so they asked our boss if we could do a complete spring-clean, top to bottom, as well as my usual jobs. My other clients are away this week and next, so I'm glad of the extra hours, but it will take two of us, for the rest of the week. So you'll be learning on the job. It'll be hard work, mind."

She smiled and sat back for a little doze. I looked out of the window. I hadn't been watching which way the minibus had set off and I didn't know the area we were driving through. It was somewhere in the Home Counties, north of London, classic commuter-belt territory. I realised I had practically no money and I didn't know where I was. I had no phone. I was completely dependent on Maggie and Home Counties Housekeeping Services to get back to Transformations.

* * *

Maggie and I were the last off the bus and were dropped outside a large detached house in its own grounds. I estimated five or six bedrooms and maybe four acres of gardens. Top to bottom cleaning of this place certainly would be hard work. It was now about ten-past eight. Maggie led the way round to the back door and let us in with a key.

We hung our outdoor coats and handbags up on pegs in what seemed to be a utility room. I removed my headscarf and stuffed it in my handbag. Then we put on our aprons and caps and changed into our indoor shoes, in my case the white ladies' sneakers I had found in my wardrobe the first night at Transformations.

"I like your uniform, love," Maggie said. "New, is it?"

"Yes, it's the first time I've had it on," I said. "Yours is nice too," I added, though hers was clearly well worn; clean, definitely, but far from new.

"Yes, well, most of our clients don't expect us to wear uniforms, but these people are rich, upper-class Americans, so..."

“Ah, you’re here,” came a strong female voice with a noticeable American accent. The owner of the voice soon appeared. She was a tall blond woman who I guessed was about thirty-five but could have been older.

“Good morning, Madam,” we chorused.

“So this is Nancy, is it?” she said.

“Yes, Madam,” I said, and found myself curtseying despite the previous conversation. It had been automatic after all of Miss Parr’s drilling.

I blushed scarlet. Both Maggie and Mrs Sheldrake seemed highly amused but didn’t comment.

“Welcome, Nancy, I hope you enjoy your first day as a maid. I must rush off on the school run, but Maggie knows everything we need you to do. I’ll see you later.” And she disappeared.

“She seems nice,” I said, still deeply embarrassed.

“Actually she is,” Maggie confirmed, “and she’s taken an immediate shine to you.” She laughed. “Maybe curtseying was a good idea after all. I might try it myself. Perhaps we’ll get a bonus.”

* * *

So the working day began. We both donned yellow rubber gloves and started on the third floor at the top of the house. There were two attic rooms. They had linoleum flooring and were fairly uncluttered – just a few boxes and suitcases – but they clearly hadn’t been cleaned for a long while. There was a lot of rubbish lying around. Maggie said that Mrs Sheldrake wanted it all cleared out apart from the suitcases, so we began with several trips down three flights of stairs with armfuls of garbage and back up again. I realised I had to be careful not to carry more than a tubby middle-aged housemaid could be expected to manage.

Maggie then ran through the ‘best practice’ for cleaning a room. First we would use long handled feather dusters on the ceilings and curtains; then ordinary dusters for the furniture, mantelpieces, book-cases, etc – particularly heavy work in the attics – and finally vacuuming. It was all obvious really. The dusting dislodged the dust to the floor, so you left the vacuuming to last. I had never done this kind of work at home before. Mind you, neither had Jackie.

“Vacuuming can take ages, if you’re not careful,” Maggie said. “You can end up doing every part several times over. Think of it as like mowing the lawn; you make a series of parallel stripes. That way you only do the whole floor once. Most vacuums don’t pick up every crumb and bit of fluff the first time, but if you go over the whole floor the way you mow a lawn, you can go back and pick up anything you’ve missed later.

“We also have to do the windows,” she said. “One of us can be doing that while the other dusts and vacuums. We can take it in turns, but cleaning windows is harder than you might think. You have to do it so that you don’t get streaks.”

She demonstrated the technique. Then she took out a small compact radio and put it on a window ledge. Thereafter whenever the vacuum was off, she switched it on. It was tuned to BBC Radio 2.

“Music while you work,” she grinned.

It took us nearly two hours to finish the attic rooms. The feather dusters were soon covered in cobwebs which had to be removed by hand. The pain in my legs and feet was back, despite wearing soft flat shoes, and I was sweaty all over. I would definitely have to take my abdominal prosthesis off that night to give it and myself a thorough clean.

I looked at the tidy, spotless rooms and experienced a strange glow of pride.

“I think we’ve earned a little break,” said Maggie. “Why don’t you go down to the kitchen and make us some coffee? I’ll size up what we need to do on the next floor.”

I guess making the coffee is a job for the junior maid. At least I didn’t need any training to do that.

* * *

The kitchen was huge and open-plan with all the appliances round the outside. We sat on high stools at the ‘island’ in the middle of the room. We chatted as we drank our coffee and I rested my aching feet.

“I see you’re not used to this kind of work,” Maggie said, laughing kindly. She had noticed me rubbing my calves. “What did you do before?”

I’d been dreading this conversation. I couldn’t tell her the truth, obviously, but I was determined to keep the lies to a minimum. I liked her too much.

“Oh, I worked in an office, but I was getting stressed out.” I realised this was the first time I had actually admitted that to myself. *In coffee veritas*. “So I decided I needed a break.”

“No partner?” she asked. “For some reason, I pictured you married.”

“Separated,” I said sadly.

Well that was sort-of-true. Jackie and I had been separated for three whole days now, the longest time we’d been apart since the Global Partners Conference in New York last autumn.

“Oh, I’m sorry. I’m divorced myself. I know what it’s like.”

That gave me a little stab of guilt.

“You got kids?” she asked.

“Uh, no,” I admitted. “You?”

“A little girl. She and I live with my mamma. I couldn’t manage without her taking care of Ella, feeding her, seeing her to and from school...”

We fell silent, contemplating how unfair life was for us working women. I felt even more guilty now, given that I had never thought of such things before. Even if nothing about this project worked out for either me or Bill, it would still have been an education.

“So how did you hook up with *Home Counties Housekeeping*?” Maggie asked after a while.

“Oh, a... friend... arranged it for me. Come to think of it, I’m a little surprised how easy it was. As you’ve seen, I’ve had no experience as a cleaning lady.”

“Oh, you’re doing fine, sweetie. It’s not rocket science. You just have to be organised. Sure, there are things to learn, to be faster and more efficient, but really any woman who’s had to look after a house can pick it up easily if she’s willing to put the work in. And you’ve taken to it like a duck to water. You’ll be on your own with your new mistress next week, won’t you? I’m sure you’ll be fine.”

She smiled. I felt another little glow of pride. Jackie and I always shared what little housework we could be bothered to do, but Maggie thought I could be a *good* housemaid! I felt silly thinking it – me, a Partner at a huge financial services firm! – but she was being so kind. I didn’t want to let her down.

She decided we would work on the kids’ bedrooms next.

“How many children do they have?” I asked her.

“Three: two girls and a boy. There’s Nicola, she’s eleven; Robby’s eight; and little Amy is five. They’re really nice kids, sharp as knives, and no trouble at all. Nicola has the biggest bedroom, with her own *en suite*. We should be able to get hers done before lunch. She keeps it tidy. We’ll do the two younger ones and their shared bathroom this afternoon. They’re much messier. That’ll probably be all we can manage today before we have to start getting dinner ready.”

So we ploughed on for the rest of the morning and made good progress, singing along to any familiar songs on the radio. (With some songs I had to be careful not to let my voice descend out of the female range.) The main jobs were cleaning the paintwork, windows and windowsills, and we had to move all the furniture to give the carpet a thorough cleaning. Maggie said she would recommend that all the carpets in the house be shampooed, but Mrs Sheldrake hadn’t asked for that yet. We also changed the sheets and pillowcases on Nicola’s bed and took the dirty ones down to the utility room for the laundry.

Nicola’s little *en suite* needed a powerful limescale cleaner and a lot of elbow grease. Maggie was impressed with how hard I was able to scrub, and I was concerned that I might have given away the masculine musculature concealed beneath my flabby feminine prostheses. But she didn’t say anything.

We ate our lunches in the kitchen. Mrs McLaughlin had packed me something appropriate for a middle-aged woman concerned about her figure – a strawberry yoghurt, a cheese and

pickle sandwich, and an apple. No crisps, no chocolate bar, no cake. All pointless as I obviously couldn't lose any of my artificial flab. I hoped I'd be able to last until dinner.

After lunch we worked solidly from 1.30 till 3.30 and managed to get the two smaller bedrooms done. Cleaning was hard physical work, but mentally undemanding. We changed the younger children's beds too and put all the dirty sheets and pillowcases in to wash. Then we stopped for tea.

"Madam will be back soon with the kids," Maggie said. "I think we'll have time to do the shared bathroom on this floor, then we'll have to start getting dinner ready."

I was scrubbing the toilet and Maggie was doing the windows when we heard banging down below and the whoops of children running around. A few minutes later Mrs Sheldrake put her head round the door.

"I've just been up to the attic. You've done a wonderful job, girls. And the kids' bedrooms! What a transformation!"

We smiled, pleased that she was pleased. I managed to resist curtsying. I couldn't believe how much I was enjoying this day.

"Would you mind keeping an eye on the children, Maggie? I've got some important e-mails to do."

"Certainly, Madam. I'll start dinner. Can you finish off here, Nancy? Oh, and take the bedding out of the washer and put it all in the tumble-dryer?"

I agreed happily. After all, I was now a skilled cleaning lady at the top of her game. I rushed to do what my mistress and the senior maid asked me to do.

* * *

An hour later, the smell of Maggie's lamb casserole was permeating the kitchen and my tummy was rumbling. I helped with chopping the vegetables. Jackie had made sure I knew the basics of cooking for two, but I was learning from Maggie how to prepare meals for larger numbers.

Nicola and Robby were sitting at the island doing their homework. Amy was on my knee. In theory I was helping her with her reading, but she was actually dozing off in the warmth of the kitchen, her head resting on my ample bosom. Not having any siblings I had very little experience with children and had been convinced I would be rubbish with them, but this concern had obviously not communicated itself to little Amy.

"What a picture of domestic bliss!" came a deep, cheerful call from the doorway.

"Daddy!" squealed three young voices. Amy was awake instantly. She jumped off my lap and ran to her father's arms. He swept her up on to his shoulders effortlessly. It was a good thing the house had high ceilings.

“So we’re just missing mother here, I see,” Mr Sheldrake continued. “Is she around, Mags?”

“In the study, I think, sir,” said Maggie. “Just finishing some e-mails.”

“And who is this?” he said, indicating me.

I got to my feet as quickly as my phony blubber permitted. I brushed my dress down and dipped another curtsy, cursing this instinctive reaction. *What had I become? When did Atkinson Stern’s Chief Technical Officer learn such feminine humility?* I lowered my head to avoid eye contact.

“This is Nancy, sir,” said Maggie. “She’s helping me with the spring-clean this week.”

“Very good. Very good,” he said, losing interest in me. “C’mon, Ames, let’s go and find Mommy.”

As soon as I saw Sheldrake I remembered why the name was familiar. We had met at the Atkinson Stern office eighteen months ago when I was tasked with explaining why we had decided not to support a takeover bid he was touting. He gave no sign of recognising me, but why on earth did he have to get home early tonight of all nights? In another quarter of an hour Maggie and I would have been outside waiting for the minibus! But I seemed to have got away with it.

I was back on the bus, chatting to the other girls, before I realised that everybody at the Sheldrake house had treated me exactly as I seemed to be – a plump, middle-aged cleaning lady. My disguise and training were working!

Nancy’s Diary – Week 1, Tuesday

So today was my first day as a maid. I never thought I’d say this, but I really enjoyed myself. My trainer, Maggie, is a lovely woman: kind, thoughtful, helpful; a real lady – despite her working class, immigrant origins, or maybe even because of them. I admit I never thought of cleaning and housework as a proper job, but Maggie takes a quiet pride in her work, and I’m beginning to see why. We’ve only cleaned about a third of the house so far, but the difference is dramatic. I find myself standing back and thinking, ‘I – we – did that, and it looks wonderful’.

So I spent most of the day emptying waste baskets, cleaning toilets, wiping work surfaces and vacuuming. The experience made me think of Dorothy, the elderly cleaner at Atkinson Stern. She comes around tidying the offices between six and eight o’clock in the evening. I was often there till she’d finished and we chatted. She always seemed so cheerful. I was beginning to understand why. Was I taking to being a maid so easily because of her? Because I’d seen that she was always happy? Poor, yes, but happy.

As planned, I removed my ‘abdominal prosthesis’ tonight to clean it. It just needed gentle wiping with washing-up liquid (provided by the Transformations kitchen), and rinsing. Now it’s hanging up on the shower rail to dry. I washed myself carefully ‘down there’. I don’t seem to have developed any adverse reaction yet.

I look weird with big female breasts and a narrow, 'straight up and down' masculine bottom half. The prosthesis looks and feels a bit like half a wet suit and will probably be just as difficult to get back on. I hope I don't have to call the ghastly McLaughlin woman to help me.

So, Bill, regarding your objectives for this project, I feel as a trainee would in any industry. It's only right for me to respect my mentor for her experience and professionalism. I should be willing to learn from her, and a little humility is entirely appropriate, but there is no need for me to be 'subservient' or 'deferential', let alone 'submissive'!

Though I do feel a lot less manly in my pink nightie, with my curlers in, and my sleep bonnet over them.

Week 1 – Wednesday

My second day as a maid-in-training was much like the first until lunchtime. In the morning we started on the first floor: the master bedroom and main guest room, both had *en suite* bathrooms.

We made good progress with only a brief coffee break, but we still had some way to go when Maggie called for an early lunch. To my surprise she led the way to the back door, took off her apron and cap, and started putting her coat on.

"Come on, Nancy dear, the minibus will be here in a moment." I was puzzled, and must have shown it, because she continued, "Oh, didn't I say? On Wednesdays the company springs for a pub lunch for all of us working in the area."

This was frightening! Apart from the relative gloom in the back of the minibus, and the Sheldrakes' kitchen, this would be my first time out in public where strangers would see me at close quarters. But I was increasingly confident of getting away with it...

It was a very cheery occasion. There were eight of us, and we occupied a large table in the saloon bar of a popular local. I don't know if you've had the pleasure of sitting near a large group of women in a pub or restaurant – a hen party, say – but we can be a little raucous! Alcohol intake was strictly limited to a half-pint or a small glass of wine each – we all had to work in the afternoon – but the girls didn't need more than that to be cheerfully loud and boisterous. We attracted resentful glances from several smartly dressed businessmen – and women – at nearby tables, and we didn't care!

At first I felt rather out of place. I had made no effort to roughen my accent and one of the girls said I sounded 'posh'. After that they all started calling me 'Posh Nancy', or just 'Posh'. They weren't cruel about it. It was more that everyone had to have a nickname – they called Maggie '*Oprah*' as she was the only well-known black woman they knew. Accepting that I was now 'Posh' to them, I said I just wished I had Victoria Beckham's figure, and they all laughed.

I was astonished at the rawness of some of the conversation. The girls swapped details of their earliest sexual experiences, contraceptive devices, feminine hygiene products, underwear comfort. They told each other about their lovers' sexual technique, or lack thereof, in terms that would have mortified the men involved. I struggled to contribute to

the conversation, for obvious reasons, quite apart from the fact that I would have died from embarrassment. Put on the spot to comment, I forlornly muttered something about being separated, but claimed that sex had never been a problem for us. There was a chorus of 'lucky bitch', but with general sympathy for my current sad state.

I had a wonderful time and learned loads! Bill and Mrs McLaughlin had left me with just enough cash to pay my share of the bill. After that I couldn't even have afforded the bus fare back to the office if the minibus broke down. For the other girls, the company's contribution would be in their next pay packets, but I wouldn't be reimbursed, of course.

Promptly at 1.45, the driver came again to pick us all up and drop us back at our afternoon workplaces.

We finished the first floor just before Mrs Sheldrake returned with the children at about half-past four. I did the laundry and put all the clean bedding away in the airing cupboard. I helped Maggie with the family dinner again. Then I sat and read with little Amy until she ran off to her bedroom to play. Nicola was struggling with her Maths homework and I surprised her by explaining the concepts of basic algebra to her in a way that her teacher had clearly failed to do. I saw Maggie watching curiously and I hoped I hadn't given myself away. I told her that I had always been good at Sums and had once thought of becoming a teacher, but I'd dropped out of school too soon.

The minibus picked us up at 6.30 as on the previous day. Mr Sheldrake hadn't returned by then. On the bus the girls were talking about their monthly evening get-together. Apparently it was like their weekly lunches, only longer and with more alcohol. Given my new identity and changed outlook on life, it sounded like great fun. It was planned for Friday night, two weeks hence. Assuming I persevered in 'Stage 1' of Bill's experiment I would still be Nancy then. Should I join the party? Or perhaps I should say, would my Mistress let me?

"I'm a bit fed up with the places we usually go," said Doreen, a young single mum. "Can we try somewhere new?"

"We'll have to anyway," said Maggie. "We're banned from Charlie's Bar."

"And the Wheatsheaf," added Sally, a middle-aged Irish lady with a piercing screech of a laugh.

"Do you have a favourite watering 'ole, Posh?" asked Doreen.

"Oh... er... I quite like the Cottage Loaf, up near the university."

This was the only place I could think of on the spur of the moment. I'd met Jackie there a couple of times as it was near her office.

"It's popular with students, so it's cheap and cheerful," I went on.

"Ugh, *students!*" said Sally.

"Oh, I don't mind students," said Maggie. "It's *bankers* I can't stand."

Everyone laughed, including me. Well I didn't feel like a banker anymore, and I certainly didn't look like one.

"Okay then," said Doreen. "The Cottage Loaf on Friday the 20th. I'll book a table and pass the word around."

Nancy's Diary – Week 1, Wednesday

Another good day. I'm finding being a maid is restful, even therapeutic, though I hadn't previously realised I needed either rest or therapy. It's nice just to let my mind wander as I scrub and vacuum and iron, not having to think about the next client meeting, or what to say in a proposal, or how to explain why an investment I'd recommended wasn't doing as well as expected. We maids don't need to worry about the future. We live in the present, so I can just concentrate on my cleaning, listen to the radio, and sing along with the songs I know.

Maggie and I are really bonding - as girlfriends. She's not unattractive and great company, but I haven't thought about her in a sexual way at all, and the same goes for the other girls.

I am surprised at how well I'm getting on with the Sheldrake kids. Nicola is a delight, bright as a button, and little Amy is so cute. And Robby is surprisingly well-behaved for an eight-year-old boy; the studious type I think, as I was. They make me wonder whether it might be time for Jackie and me to start a family. Mind you, the fact that I seem to be quite good at being 'maternal' doesn't mean I'll be able to manage 'paternal' when I go back to being Dan!

I did my own washing tonight in the Transformations laundry room: two grey uniform dresses, my nightie, and all the bras, panties, slips and tights I'd worn so far. I'll wear my blue uniform tomorrow, and iron my greys tomorrow night. A maid's work is never done.

Oh damn – my curlers!

Week 1 – Thursday

Maggie and I have finally reached the ground floor. We plan to do the lounge, dining room and study today. I'm now much faster, and more thorough, at all my cleaning tasks. Maggie is pleased with my progress.

After morning coffee, she sent me round all the bedrooms to collect the family's laundry baskets. She put me in charge of the washing, which would clearly take several loads. She showed me how to separate whites from coloureds, being a little surprised that I didn't already know to do that. She warned me to pick out Mrs Sheldrake's and Nicola's delicate underthings, which might require washing by hand. She was less surprised that I never did that with my own underwear. She laughed when I explained that I had never owned anything delicate or expensive enough to be called 'lingerie'. I suspected that the same applied to her.

There was little danger of mixing up Robby's clothes with those of his father, or those of the three females in the family, because they were all of such varying sizes, but she warned me that that wouldn't be the case for all families I worked for. So it would often be sensible to do separate loads for each family member. I took note of the advice, although it didn't seem likely I would need it. Then I realised I would have to be careful not to mix up Jackie's and

Nancy's clothes! But again our sizes were very different. Beautiful, slim Jackie would be swamped in plump Nancy's – *my* – bras and knickers.

By mid-afternoon Maggie and I had finished the cleaning we had set ourselves to do today, so I had my first ironing lesson. I wasn't completely unfamiliar with the chore, which was just as well because Maggie would have been very suspicious of a middle-aged woman who had never done any ironing, but she tutted and showed me how to do it more efficiently, like a proper maid. I resolved to teach Jackie when this was all over.

Maggie expected that the washing we'd done so far would keep me busy for the rest of the day and well into the next. And we still had to do a couple more loads of washing if we wanted it all to be dry by the morning.

Then I remembered that tomorrow would be my last day.

When Mrs Sheldrake came back with the children, we were all in the huge kitchen again. There were clothes drying everywhere, overflowing from the utility room. Nicola and Robby were doing their homework; Maggie was cooking; and I was well into the ironing. Amy wanted to help me but she couldn't handle the iron safely and was only slowing me down. Fortunately, she quickly got bored and went upstairs to play. I found ironing to be my least favourite maid chore, but even that was quite restful.

We were there till 6.30 as on the previous days. I was again relieved not to have to face Mr Sheldrake.

Nancy's Diary – Week 1, Thursday

I seem to have settled into a routine as the Sheldrakes' junior maid. Every now and then I get a guilty feeling about neglecting my real job, but since I have neither phone nor laptop there's nothing I can do to keep up with anything happening at the office. Before I left on Sunday afternoon, I asked Jackie to check regularly for anything urgent, but she argued that I was supposed to be having a complete break. In any case I'm not sure she could contact me even if she wanted to.

And she's right – I'm supposed to be on sabbatical, aren't I? A proper rest. That makes me chuckle. I don't think I've ever worked so hard in my life, but as I write this, I realise it's been quite a while since I've had such a feeling of satisfaction in my work – probably since making Partner two years ago.

I know it sounds ridiculous to compare being a cleaning lady with making a fortune at Atkinson Stern, but why should it? Obviously winning a contract with an international investment fund is a big deal, but I've done that many times, with six-figure bonuses each time. The thrill has long since worn off and I could retire comfortably now on what I've already earned. But the job satisfaction I'm getting from being Nancy the maid – even with the hard graft that requires – has given me a sense of fulfilment I haven't felt for ages.

But I mustn't be unrealistic. A lot of this must be the newness of the experience. I'll probably get fed up with cleaning very quickly and long to be back in my corner office with teams of

secretaries and junior analysts at my beck and call. But for the moment, I'm actually looking forward to work each day, and I have to admit I haven't felt like that for a long time.

Week 1 – Friday

As the week wore on, I enjoyed the company of my fellow maids and cleaning ladies on the minibus to and from work more and more. Their earthy humour was so refreshing. I joined in enthusiastically and even learned some choice new vocabulary. There was no competition for preferment in our little society. Everyone was equal. No one was trying to prove they were better than anyone else. I realised that throughout my entire working life I had no real friends or colleagues, only rivals. At Atkinson Stern *everyone* was a competitor, ultimately for the few precious Partnerships. No wonder I was stressed.

By the end of the week I knew that I had made a lot of progress in my new career. I had learned everything I needed to know to look after a house and keep it clean and welcoming. I was really looking forward to getting back to Jackie and showing her what I had learned, but I was also increasingly concerned about the effect my transformation would have on us. I mean, our relationship would obviously be different while we were role-playing, but what about when it all came to an end? After four weeks of intense femininity would she be able to see me as her husband again? Would I be able to *be* her husband again?

When the minibus dropped us at the Sheldrakes' for our last day of spring-cleaning, Maggie touched me on the arm and said, "Penny for your thoughts!" I had obviously been deep in thought and lost to the world. "Hey, are you all right, love?"

"I'm fine," I said with a smile. "I was just thinking about next week."

"Oh yes, you'll be looking after your new mistress all by yourself, won't you? You do know you can call on me if you need any help, don't you?"

She was so kind. I felt myself getting misty-eyed.

"Thank you, Maggie," I managed to say. "I really appreciate that." We hugged.

"No worries, love," she said cheerfully. "Now we've just got the kitchen, the utility room, and the cloakroom to do today. We'll do the kitchen together. It'll be a lot of work. Then I'll do the other rooms while you finish the ironing."

"Thanks, boss," I smiled. I knew she hated ironing.

The kitchen *was* a huge job. We had to take down every pot, pan, bottle and jar and scour out the cupboards with cleanser and scrubbing brush. We threw away a lot of congealed jars of jam, marmalade and chutney, bottles of salad cream and tomato sauce, custard powder, and Marmite – all years beyond their 'Use By' dates. I assumed it had all been left by the previous tenants and Mrs Sheldrake had been too busy to have a clear-out. We recorded everything that might need to be replaced in a new shopping list.

It was my job to stand up on one of the shaky stools to reach the higher cupboards. I was aware anyone below could look up my skirt, but they wouldn't see anything unexpected, just

my control-top tights over plain white cotton panties. Not that Maggie would have dreamt of doing so.

* * *

Over lunch she gave me my last maid lesson: sewing. As a conscientious housekeeper she had inspected all the clothes as they came out of the washing machine and found a small tear in one of Robby's shirts and a button which had come off one of Mr Sheldrake's. She sat me down and taught me how to tidy up the rip and sew the button back on. I struggled to thread the needle, and wasn't terribly neat, but I didn't do too badly.

"I can't believe you've never done any sewing!" she said. "What on earth did they teach you at school?"

"I did carpentry," I said truthfully, taking a small risk. "It was a progressive school. I was terrible at woodwork too." Also true.

"So did they make the boys do needlework?"

"I don't think it was *that* progressive."

She laughed and examined my endeavour with the button.

"OK, well that's not a bad effort. It'll probably stay on. But you should practise. Both the men have socks that could do with darning too, but nobody does that nowadays. Mrs Sheldrake told me never to bother. She'd rather throw them away and buy new."

* * *

After lunch Maggie cleaned the utility room and the downstairs toilet while I finished the ironing. By mid-afternoon we had put all the clean clothes back in the correct cupboards and drawers.

So everything was finished when Mrs Sheldrake returned with the children. She was delighted and gave us each a £20 tip. We both thanked her profusely. I realised with some emotion that it was now pretty much the only money I had in my purse.

"Thank you for everything, girls," she said. "I do hope we see you again sometime, Nancy. You were wonderful with Amy. I imagine she'll miss you dreadfully."

"I'll miss her too, Madam. She's lovely – all your children are."

The Sheldrakes were going out for dinner that evening, so Maggie called the office to ask for an early pick-up. When we got back, and I had called for my taxi, Maggie and I had another tearful parting.

"But I'll see you on the 20th, won't I?" she said, with a sniff.

"I hope so," I said, "But I suppose it will depend on my mistress."

“Do you know what she’s like? You must have met her?”

“Oh yes. She’s mostly fine, but I think she might be a bit unpredictable sometimes...”

Also true.

* * *

Mrs McLaughlin had left a note for me to come and see her when I returned. This was unwelcome. My enjoyment of the last four days had a lot to do with not having seen *her* since Tuesday morning. She wanted to give me my instructions for checking out the following day, and had also arranged for us to have dinner together that evening. Ugh!

It turned out to be a much more pleasant occasion than I had anticipated. True, she carried on from where she had left off at dinner on Monday, correcting every little unfeminine slip in my mannerisms, and pulling me up whenever I used an inappropriate phrase, or was too forceful in my speech for a middle-aged maidservant. But generally she was encouraging and even kind.

“I must say you’ve surprised me this week, Nancy,” she said over dessert and coffee. “I don’t recall anyone putting so much effort into their transformation as you have, and I’ve no doubt that, if you remember your lessons, no one will ever suspect you are anything other than female. I think you can tell your psychiatrist that your year of living as a woman began tonight. I’ll be happy to stand as your reference if needed.”

“Pardon me – my year living as... What do you mean?”

“Oh, you know; you won’t be allowed to undergo Sexual Reassignment Surgery until you’ve convinced Prof Hawkins that the operation is right for you, and that means you have to live as a woman for up to a year. He must have told you all this, mustn’t he?”

She looked confused for the first time since I’d known her, but not as confused as I was. Bill had told her that I wanted to become a woman and that he was my psychiatrist! Had that really been necessary? Still there was nothing to be gained from correcting her impression, and it might even compromise Bill’s project.

“Oh... er... yes,” I said haltingly. “I just haven’t been thinking about that this last week. I’ve been too busy,” I finished lamely.

“Quite understandable,” she sympathised. “You’ve worked hard and done very well. I don’t think we have anything more to teach you.”

The rest of the meal passed pleasantly but I wasn’t really concentrating on the conversation. Why hadn’t Bill mentioned that he’d led the Transformations people to believe I was transitioning? (I’ll leave this out of the diary though, I think.)

Nancy's Diary – Week 1, Friday

So my transformation is complete. I look like a woman; I move and speak like a woman; I'm used to pulling down my tights and panties and sitting down to go to the toilet; and I've been working as a maid for nearly a week. And it seems that no one at all has suspected that I'm a fake. (Which reminds me, I'll probably need to get my hair done next week. My perm is looking a little tatty. I'm obviously not very good with curlers.)

I can go into the role-play with confidence. I fully understand my – temporary! – new position in society - I'm a servant. I know I have to do as I'm told and mustn't answer back. This is entirely new to me and strangely exciting. I can't remember ever having been in a servile position before. I was regarded as a leader at school. I got straight Firsts at Cambridge. At Atkinson Stern I was on the fast track from the moment I joined, with support staff to do my grunt work. I have never been subordinate to anyone.

So this will be a new experience. It's been fine so far because everyone in a position of authority over me has been fair and reasonable (with the exception of Mrs McLaughlin, and arguably she was only treating me as she did to help me get used to my new status).

But I don't feel submissive. I feel professional. I'm a hard-working cleaning lady. I have skills that are in demand.

But what will Jackie make of me? While I've been doing this, has she been training to be a dominatrix? If she pushes me too hard, how will I respond?

Bill, you mentioned that in some abusive domme-sub relationships, physical violence was common. I can't believe Jackie would ever hit me, but if she did, I certainly wouldn't put up with it. And that might mean the end of us.

Week 1 - Saturday

I wasn't roused on the Saturday morning, but I had been warned that check-out time was eleven and I would need to be down in the canteen by 9.30 if I wanted breakfast. I was up by eight.

I had taken my prosthesis off again on Friday night to clean it and shower properly, so this morning I had to squeeze into it again. I took my curlers out, brushed my hair, did my make-up, and put on clean underwear while I thought about what to wear. Not that I had much choice. I eventually settled on a white polka dot number (which was probably a little young for Nancy).

After breakfast I got ready to check out. Transformations had provided a large, battered suitcase, so I did my packing: four maid's uniforms, caps and aprons; three second-hand dresses; two nighties; four bra and panty sets; several pairs of tights; three pairs of heels; my white sneakers; some cheap hand cream, cosmetics and make-up remover; curlers; toothbrush; hairbrush; and my other bathroom effects. That was all I, Nancy, owned, apart from twenty pounds and some change in my purse. I hadn't been this poor since my student days. How do people live their lives like this?

Bill had left a message to expect him at about two o'clock, so that gave me the best part of five hours to kill. Rather than sit around the Manor House I decided to try and go into town. The little money I had from Mrs Shel Drake's tip wouldn't run to taxis, so I asked Angela on Reception about bus services. I would have to walk the length of the Transformations driveway – about a quarter of a mile – then there was a bus stop half a mile further on down the main road.

I left my suitcase with Angela and set off. I was wearing my one outdoor coat and my headscarf (to protect the remains of my perm), and carrying my handbag. I had decided to practise walking in heels. Feeling brave, I chose my two-inchers. I hoped I wouldn't have cause to regret that.

I caught a glimpse of my appearance in the glass of the main door. I saw a portly, rather shabby middle-aged lady, completely indistinguishable from millions of similar women up and down the country.

As I stepped outside I was aware for the first time of being *vulnerable* as a lone female. The thirty-two-year-old man underneath was almost certainly a match for any possible assailant, but Nancy's big boobs, huge arse, tight skirt, and high heels would make defending myself problematic. On the plus side, I looked too poor to be worth mugging. Anyway it wasn't likely to happen in the centre of town in broad daylight. Nevertheless I made a mental note to keep a tight grip on my handbag. I couldn't afford to let a purse snatcher steal everything I had.

Although it was July there was a cool breeze, so I was glad of my coat. I hadn't been outside much this last week, being ferried from place to place by taxi and minibus, so the wind blowing up my skirt was an unfamiliar feeling, but quite pleasant in a slightly naughty way – yet another insight into female sexuality.

I enjoyed the walk down the drive and along the road to the bus stop. I concentrated on my feminine gait, recalling Miss Parr's instructions, and I realised I was doing it naturally now, including just the right amount of sexy wiggle. I hadn't thought about the pains in my calves and ankles for a couple of days. I had adjusted to walking in heels. Apparently the muscles had stretched and recovered.

I got on the half-full bus. The driver frowned when I had to give him a twenty-pound note for my fare. He pointed at the *Please don't ask the Driver for change* notice. I tried to look pathetic and explained that I had just been paid and that was all the money I had – a shameless attempt to solicit his sympathy. But it was true and it seemed to work. Grumbling he reached into a wallet under the dashboard and gave me £18.50 which I stuffed in my purse. I reflected that I hadn't been on a bus since I was a student. I rarely even used trains nowadays.

I got off at what looked like the town centre. First I checked where the bus left from for my return journey. The timetable said they were every half hour, so the last one I could afford to take would be the 1.25 if I didn't want to keep Bill waiting.

Then I went off to explore. I started with a large Marks & Spencer's and made straight for the Womenswear section. Not that I could actually afford to buy anything, but I thought I might try something on. That's what women do, right?

I browsed the racks and picked out a couple of nice-looking dresses: a pretty floral print midi, and a navy-blue drape half sleeve wrap – not that I'd had any idea of what they were before I entered the store. I assumed I would be a size 16, based on what Mrs McLaughlin had said.

I felt deliciously naughty in the changing area where there were women of all ages, shapes and sizes happily dressing and undressing. There were cubicles but most of my fellow customers didn't bother pulling the curtains closed. I couldn't remember ever seeing so many half-naked women in just their bras and panties before. I also couldn't help noticing how plain my own lingerie was compared to theirs. But I was only a maid, after all. Even M&S was out of my price range really; I certainly couldn't afford Victoria's Secret. Conscious of my ugly waist-cincher, I kept my underslip on.

I tried the floral midi first. I stepped out to look at myself in the full-length mirror. Not bad! Perhaps I could dip into Dan's savings somehow and buy Nancy this dress? Then it hit me – *what on earth was I thinking?* Firstly I was only going to be her for three weeks, and secondly this was about *role play*. With less than £20 in my purse I could only afford clothes from charity shops, and that would still be true after I got my first pay packet from Mrs Richards, my employer. We could hardly assess whether the mistress-maid relationship would tend towards 'domme-sub' if Nancy had a secret, unlimited source of funds.

I went back into my cubicle and changed into the blue dress. A saleslady approached with a big cheesy smile on her face. She must have noticed me as I came in and decided that I was in dire need of a pretty new M&S dress. I was going to get the full sales spiel now. Still it would be another good test of how convincing I was in my new guise, so I decided to grin and bear it.

She told me how the navy-blue wrap dress 'could have been made for me' and engaged me in friendly conversation for at least ten minutes before I had to admit I was 'just looking'. She smiled again, made me promise to call her if she could help in *any* way, and wandered off. I changed back into my own second-hand dress and made for the exit.

I passed the make-up counter on my way out and decided to check the prices of the cosmetics Transformations had given me. I eventually found the brands, down at the 'Dirt Cheap' end of the rack. I turned to leave but a very well-dressed, very heavily made-up lady barred my way. She smiled warmly and said they were offering free makeovers to selected customers today. It would only take half an hour. Would I be interested?

For a moment I was tempted. I would have loved to see what I could look like after a proper, expert makeover...! Then I realised with a stab of panic that I couldn't afford to let a professional make-up artist anywhere *near* me. My waxing was five days old. I had carefully shaved what little growth I could find, but it was still much too risky. Even if she failed to spot any stubble, there was still my tiny, almost invisible Adam's Apple. Not to mention my voice. I thanked her but said I had too much to do; perhaps another time?

I did a little more window shopping. I saw several dresses and some lovely shoes. It felt strange to know that I couldn't buy anything, when I was so used to being wealthy enough to indulge any whim. I decided to stop for refreshments. I bought a copy of *Cosmopolitan*, an oat and raisin cookie, and the cheapest coffee I could get. That still meant I had spent nearly half of my money this morning. I found a seat in the food court. No one bothered me; indeed no one looked at me twice.

I had a pleasant morning, reading about make-up and hair fashions, none of which I could afford. I felt relaxed. It did occur to me that maybe I was taking the role-playing a little too far, but at the moment I was very much enjoying being Nancy and didn't want to stop. I was even reconciled to my ugly name. It felt... appropriate now.

I'm Nancy. I'm just the maid.

After finishing my coffee, and remembering my training, I redid my lipstick in the food court Ladies' before making my way to the bus stop.

* * *

At 1.45 I was back in the Transformations foyer waiting for Bill. I wondered how he would greet me. Would he call me 'Dan' and thank me for doing all this for him? Would our conversation be the usual banter between two old friends, young male professionals, and equals? Would we share a laugh about how I now looked before we got into this silly role-play in earnest?

Or would he assume the role-play had started? Would he treat me as the poor, down-at-heel, middle-aged, working-class charlady I now looked like? I resolved to let him open the conversation and react accordingly. If he wanted me to stay in character, that's what he would get; no shared history; no friendly banter.

He eventually showed up at about ten past two. As he came in through the front door heading for the Reception desk, I rose to meet him. He glanced in my direction then turned back to Angela. Then he did a classic double-take.

"Nancy?" he gasped.

So, that's how it's going to be. We're off and running, are we?

"Good afternoon, Professor," I said, as respectfully as a servant should, though I managed to resist bobbing a curtsy.

"Well," he said, "I'm very impressed. How has your week been?"

"I've learnt a lot," I said.

It didn't feel appropriate to provide further detail. We always used to tell each other everything and he might have been hoping I would share my experience of my transformation. But if that's what he wanted he shouldn't have called me 'Nancy'. As far as I was concerned I was no longer Bill's old friend. Apparently I was a transgender patient

hoping for SRS and he was my psychiatrist. In any case, a maid doesn't gossip with a professional man, especially not about her underwear, make-up, or hair styling. I wondered whether I should be calling him 'sir'. I decided against it.

I probably shouldn't be starting conversations with my betters, but I couldn't help asking, "Do you think 'Nancy' will pass muster?"

"Well, you certainly look the part. Here let me take that for you. Your bill's paid for on Jackie's credit card."

To my amusement he reached for my case. I wondered whether that was because my disguise was so effective he actually thought I needed a strong man to lift it; or maybe it was because he didn't want to be seen as the kind of cad who would let a woman carry her own luggage. He led the way to his car. He was proud of his ten-year-old Range Rover (though I noticed he never turned down the chance to ride in my Porsche 911; I mean, *Dan's* Porsche, of course).

I got in the passenger seat and fastened the seat belt, now quite used to settling the strap between my boobs. Once we were moving Bill handed me an envelope. Inside were various pieces of ID for 'Mrs Nancy Potts'. Apparently I was divorced, not merely separated. For some reason I felt sad about that.

There was a cheap mobile phone and a debit card, but no credit card and no driving licence.

"So you're Nancy from now on, OK?" he said, clearly unaware that I was quite used to being her already (and now perfectly happy with that). "You can put all that stuff in your handbag. The bank card is quite genuine – the PIN number is Jackie's birthday – but there's only £30 in the account. You'll get a small sum as your wages at the end of each week. That's a pay-as-you-go phone with about ten minutes' call time on it. I'm sure you won't need to ring anyone; it's just for emergencies – like if you get stranded somewhere, you can call a taxi."

I thanked him quietly. He kept looking at me askance. I assumed he couldn't believe how effective my disguise was, but it might also have been that he was surprised I wasn't attempting to make conversation. Dan and Bill would normally be talking nineteen-to-the-dozen when they hadn't seen each other for a week. But now the atmosphere was strained. Well he couldn't have it both ways; I could be Dan or Nancy. I couldn't be both at the same time.

"Is there anything else you want to ask me?" he said finally.

"No, I don't think so. I know how this thing is supposed to go for the next three weeks. I hope you get what you need. Oh, by the way, I've been keeping a diary as you asked. You can take this week's pages when you drop me."

"Right. Thanks," and he lapsed into silence.

Fair enough; you wouldn't expect a university professor to have much to say to a cleaning lady like me. After ten minutes of silence, he pulled into a supermarket car park.

“You can do this week’s food shopping for your mistress and yourself here. The project will pay. There’s a vacuum, dusters, a mop and buckets at the house, but you’ll have to get all the other cleaning materials you’ll need here.”

He reached for his briefcase from the back seat. We went into the supermarket together, but he parked himself on a seat near the checkouts. He got out the morning paper. So he was going to sit and read while I did our shopping.

I went and got a trolley and loaded it up with everything I could think of to last us at least a week. It all had to go on Bill’s credit card, of course. I was glad to see that he winced when he saw the total.

* * *

The rented house was a four-bedroom detached on the opposite side of town from Dan and Jackie’s luxury apartment by the river. Bill pulled the Range Rover up onto the driveway.

“I’m afraid it’s a bit of a mess,” he said. “It’s been unoccupied for several months.”

I looked around the outside at the overgrown lawn and the broken front gate.

“It’s perfectly sound inside,” he insisted. “Everything works – gas, electricity, telephone, all the appliances – except the dishwasher. We’ve disconnected that, because a maid should get used to doing the washing-up. Sorry, but it’s part of the job.”

Bill was aware Dan had never done any washing-up in his life. Presumably he thought having to do servile jobs like that that would make me more submissive, but as Nancy I had already spent a week cleaning all round the house including the kitchen. I was quite used to scrubbing toilets now. I wasn’t going to be fazed by a little washing-up.

“The furniture is OK – mostly quite new,” Bill went on. “But the previous tenants left in a hurry and didn’t do any tidying-up. It really just needs a good clean.”

“And that would be my job, I suppose,” I said, ironically.

“Now, now. Remember your place, Nancy,” he said, smiling.

“You couldn’t have hired a cleaning firm to fix it up for us?”

“Then what would you do all day?” He put on a more serious face. “Look, this is an essential part of the role-playing. Dommies make their subs do all the housework, and they work them *hard*. We need to know if that will affect your relationship; in particular, will it make you feel more submissive?”

He showed me round the house. There was rubbish everywhere: cardboard boxes full of broken toys; fast food containers; used condoms and feminine hygiene products; even unwashed underwear for both sexes. Had our new home been used for sexual liaisons? I resolved to be extra diligent in my cleaning.

Downstairs there was a cloakroom, a large sitting room, and a good-sized kitchen with a serving hatch through to a small dining room. There were two more reception rooms, one of which looked like it had been used as a study. It was full of scrap paper, tattered files, and opened correspondence – at a glance, mostly bills.

There was a small utility room off the kitchen and a door which led through to a two-car garage. A glass patio door led from the sitting room into a small conservatory, which was baking hot and stuffy as all its windows and the patio door were closed. We opened everything we could see to let in some air. I made a mental note to lock up before going to bed.

I followed Bill upstairs. He was still being a gentleman and carrying my suitcase. There was the master bedroom with its *en suite* bathroom; two more double bedrooms; a family bathroom; and a fourth bedroom I would have called a box room. All the beds had been stripped, but we found plenty of bedding in the airing cupboard on the landing.

“I think the little bedroom is probably best for the maid, don’t you?” said Bill.

So he put my suitcase on the bed in the smallest bedroom. I opened it and got out my diary. I ripped out the pages I’d already written and gave them to him.

The whole house was decently furnished, and the carpets and curtains were all reasonable, but there was dust and spider webs everywhere. It had taken me and Maggie the best part of a week to clean a place not much bigger than this, and I would have to do this alone.

We went back downstairs. Bill handed me two sets of keys.

“It’s gas central heating, but as it’s July you’ll only need the boiler for hot water. I’m sure you can work out where the fuse box and stopcock are, but if you can’t, there’s a pile of documents in the top drawer of the desk in the sitting room. They probably cover everything.”

He checked the time and made for the front door. I looked at my little ladies’ watch; it was five o’clock.

“I’ll bring... er, Mrs Richards here at this time tomorrow, so you have twenty-four hours to get everything ready for her. Don’t forget she’ll be expecting dinner later.”

He opened the door.

“Just her?” I said.

“Pardon me?”

“I mean, you won’t be staying for dinner tomorrow night?”

“Oh, no. I think you and your mistress need some time alone together, don’t you? To get to know each other.” I made no reply. “But remember: *she’s not your wife*. She’s not even your friend. She’s your *employer*. And I’ll be saying the same to her. Don’t expect her to be all

love-dovey when she gets here tomorrow. She has to treat you as *just her maid* if this whole exercise is to be of any use at all.”

He smiled and walked out. I closed the door behind him.

I felt humiliated and resentful in front of my oldest friend, and it destroyed my good mood. I felt I should have been enjoying the experience more. Of course it was a little embarrassing, but what had happened to my ‘open mind’? The old Dan would have been finding it at least interesting, even fun. So why was I feeling *bitter*? I was clearly still a long way from a full recovery from Dan’s stressful life. It might be good for me to be Nancy for a while longer...

I still felt a little silly in my bra and knickers and tights, but much less so than at the beginning of the week. I realised – with some surprise – that I was getting used to my lingerie and make-up and other feminine paraphernalia. I even found it all... exciting!

That evening I cleaned the sitting room, the family bathroom and my bedroom, and made up the bed. All that took me nearly two hours, by which time I was famished, not having had any lunch. I made myself a cold chicken sandwich and a cup of cocoa.

When I had finished eating I went upstairs and made up my bed in the maid’s room. Then I took off my dress and the dreaded waist-cincher – though I noticed that it didn’t seem as uncomfortable as it had been. With the hard physical work and light meals I thought I had probably lost a little weight, but I had no way to check. Still the only thing I had that would fit me without the girdle was my nightie. I debated whether to take off my prosthesis but decided that I would want to do that tomorrow when Jackie was here. Hope springs eternal!

But before I could go to bed: curlers and diary.

Nancy’s Diary – Week 1, Saturday

As you will have seen from my earlier entries, I have become quite reconciled to my new temporary persona. I very much enjoyed the company of Maggie and the other maids. I found my work physically tough but strangely relaxing mentally, which led me to conclude that Jackie had been right – I was badly stressed.

And somehow I doubt that using my sabbatical to do research, write a book, or tour vineyards or museums (as some of my colleagues had done), would have been as effective for stress relief. At least, I assume the key was the hard, repetitive, mindless physical work, to take my mind off high finance. (Perhaps it would have been just as good to do something physical, like build a wall around our garden or lay flagstones for a patio? But as Jackie scathingly pointed out, I lacked the skills – or enthusiasm – for DIY.) Or maybe it was the creation of a whole other personality? Or maybe the cross-dressing? (Just how twisted is my psyche anyway?) Whatever. Being Nancy has been excellent therapy and I am looking forward to more of it.

But seeing you again was uncomfortable, Bill. You treated me as the maid, your social inferior – which you obviously thought was necessary – and you warned me that Jackie would too. So the only friendship and warmth I can expect for the next three weeks will be from my fellow maids – if I even get the chance to see them. The thought is upsetting. Perhaps I should give up this stupid experiment?

Week 2 - Sunday

Having gone to bed early last night I was up at six. I went down in my nightie and dressing gown and had coffee and some cereal. After breakfast I showered, took my curlers out, and did a light make-up.

Then I had to decide what to wear. It occurred to me that I could wear men's clothes if I wanted to – a T-shirt and jeans, for example – but I didn't have anything like that with me. In any case, no shirt of Dan's would go over my big bust, and my enhanced posterior would never squeeze into any of his trousers.

But the idea was ridiculous anyway. Nancy would never wear anything like that. While she was working she would only wear a uniform dress and apron, *and I was Nancy*.

Since I would be spending most of the day cleaning, I dressed in my grey maid's uniform. I would change into my smart black dress when welcoming my mistress home.

I clearly couldn't clean the entire house before Jackie arrived, and what I *could* do wouldn't have been up to the 'spring clean' quality Maggie and I had done for the Sheldrakes. So I settled for clearing the rubbish – filling the two bins by the back door – running a feather duster round the ceilings and curtains, vacuuming everywhere, and wiping down the paintwork with a damp cloth. Proper cleaning, to the standard I had been trained to do, would have to wait till later.

The kitchen in particular was disgusting. All the cupboards were filthy and there was grease and grime everywhere. I would have to wash every pot, plate, knife, fork and spoon before using it, as well as after.

Apart from a brief pause for lunch I worked through till after half-past four. I had vacuumed the entire house and dusted and wiped all the rooms Jackie would be likely to use: the sitting room, dining room, kitchen, and the master bedroom and its en suite.

I was really proud of myself for the good maid I was becoming. I hoped my mistress would approve. Inside me, Dan cringed a little at that thought, but I'm Nancy now. I don't listen to Dan anymore. Hopefully that would be good for my stress levels.

I tidied myself up, changed into my formal black maid's dress, and put on a clean apron. I refreshed my make-up, trying something a little bolder for the evening. I looked at myself in the mirror. I didn't look too bad – for a slightly overweight working woman entering middle age.

I returned to the kitchen to prepare afternoon tea. Bill hadn't told me to do that, but I decided it was something a good maid would do unasked.

I made some scones and put them in the oven to bake. I set out a large tray with cups, saucers, side plates, teaspoons, a little jug of milk, a lemon, sugar cubes, butter, strawberry jam, and clotted cream.

The doorbell rang promptly at five o'clock. They were here! I tore my rubber gloves off, threw them under the sink, and hurried out into the hall. I checked my hair and make-up in a wall mirror and rushed to open the front door.

There was Jackie, my gorgeous wife, in a white embroidered smock and jeans. A smile was just starting to form on her lips, then she saw me, and her jaw fell open. Bill, behind her, cleared his throat.

"Welcome home, Mrs Richards," I whispered, lowering my eyes and dropping into a little curtsey.

I didn't understand why they were so surprised. They both knew Dan never did anything by halves. If I was going to role-play Nancy the maid, I was going to do it *properly*, and I would expect them to do the same.

Both Jackie and Bill goggled. I opened the door wider and stood back to let them in. I saw there were two cars in the driveway, Bill's ancient Range Rover and Jackie's smart Mercedes C-Class Cabriolet.

"I'm ready to serve afternoon tea in the sitting room, if that's all right with you, Madam," I said.

"Um, that will be fine, er... Nancy, thank you," Jackie said, hesitantly.

She made as if to touch me, changed her mind, and brushed past.

Bill had warned me not to expect Jackie to throw her arms round my neck and cover me with kisses, but I had hoped for a little more affection in her greeting than this. Presumably he had given her the same instructions as he had given to me: *you're mistress and maid – no lovey-dovey stuff*. Or maybe she was so shocked by my transformation that she couldn't bring herself to show me any affection at all?

"You can bring Madam's cases in from the car later, Nancy," said Bill.

I acknowledged the order with another curtsey, as I had been taught.

I closed the front door and led them into the sitting room. Bill looked round, making no attempt to conceal his surprise at how the place had been transformed. It's nice for a maid to see that her work is appreciated. I took their coats and they made themselves comfortable. I hung the coats in the cloakroom and went out to the kitchen to fetch the tea.

"Something smells delicious!" Bill said, as I came into the sitting room with the tray.

"Scones!" said Jackie. "Did you make them yourself, er, Nancy?"

"Yes, Madam," I said. I put the tray down on a side table and poured her tea.

As I turned to pass Jackie her cup, I blocked Bill's view of her face and she winked at me. And suddenly the sun came out again for me. She *was* acting the unfeeling mistress for Bill's benefit. I didn't wink back though. That would have been totally out of character.

I turned to Bill. “Would you prefer milk or lemon, sir?”

I had known what beers, wine and spirits he liked for fifteen years, but couldn’t recall ever making him tea.

“Milk, please,” he said. I gave him his cup. “But shouldn’t you have asked your mistress first?” he asked, clearly trying to catch me out.

“Oh Nancy knows how I like my tea,” Jackie said, leaping to my defence.

I passed out the plates and scones and offered butter, jam and cream.

“Shall I bring your luggage in while you’re taking tea, Madam?” I asked.

“Oh yes, that would be... er... very helpful, Nancy. I’ve just brought two suitcases and my briefcase.”

Jackie was finding it difficult to find the right words to address her maid who once was her husband. She gave me her car keys.

I had found a little handbell in a kitchen drawer and gave it to her. “Please just ring if you need anything, Madam, or when the gentleman is ready to leave.”

Jackie looked at the little bell like I had just handed her a live cobra.

“Er, thank you, Nancy.”

So I left them to it. Well there couldn’t be much conversation between three people when one was just the maid, however long they had known each other.

As I closed the sitting room door behind me, I could just hear Jackie whispering, “Did you tell her to make scones? I don’t think Dan would have known how.”

That was gratifying in a way, but she was already thinking of me as ‘her’. For some reason I found that very satisfying; it didn’t bother me at all...

* * *

I made two journeys out to the car for Jackie’s luggage. I could probably have managed the three bags in a single trip, but not if I wanted to maintain my feminine image. Neighbours seeing a middle-aged maid carrying all that luggage might have been suspicious. I didn’t hear any conversation from the sitting room as I passed.

I took the cases up to the master bedroom and was about to dump them on the bed when I had a thought. Was I a *lady’s maid* too? If so, I should unpack for her. It’s not as though I hadn’t touched her intimates before, although that was usually while she was wearing them.

I had given the wardrobes and chests of drawers a thorough cleaning with soap and water earlier in the day. They were dry now, so I unpacked all her stuff into those by her usual side

of the bed. I looked sadly at the wardrobe and drawers on my side, which were empty and likely to remain so.

I heard the tinkling of the little bell less than twenty minutes later and rushed downstairs. I knocked on the sitting room door.

"Come in," Jackie called.

Bill was just getting up.

"Now I just wanted to remind you both of a few things you need to remember if this is going to work." He turned to me. "Nancy, as a maid you have to *act* as a maid. That means you curtsy whenever you serve or do anything for anyone. You answer your mistress by saying, *Yes, Madam*, and you stand and wait on her whenever she requires you to, including at mealtimes. You serve her food, refill her glass whenever it is empty, and do whatever she tells you. You eat only after she has finished and when you have cleared up in the kitchen."

"Can't I invite... her... to eat with me if I want to?" Jackie asked.

"I certainly wouldn't advise it. As I said, you can do whatever you want to, but remember she's your *maid*. If you sit down and eat with her, she may become over-familiar and make assumptions about your relationship."

"All right, Bill, I understand." She sounded frustrated. She turned to me. "So I *may* invite you to join me for dinner sometimes, but you mustn't expect it," she said sternly (for Bill's benefit, I hoped). "Do you understand, Nancy?"

"Yes, Madam," I said, and gave her my most elaborate curtsy yet.

Bill made to leave. I fetched his coat from the cloakroom and helped him on with it.

"Thank you, Nancy," he said. "The tea and scones were excellent, by the way."

"Thank you, sir," I said.

"I'll come by some time during the week. Keep up the good work!"

"I will, sir," I said, and closed the door behind him.

I turned to face Jackie and had the breath knocked out of me as she threw herself at me. Her arms were round my shoulders, her legs were locked round my waist, and she was smothering me with kisses.

"Oh baby, I couldn't *wait* for him to go! Has it been too awful? What have they done to you? Why are you wearing glasses? I love your hair! Is that a perm? And your make-up! You're really pretty! But you're so *fat*! You've got bigger boobs than I do! And that *arse*! It's not permanent, is it?"

"Madam...!" I said, when I could get a word in. She dropped off me back to the floor.

“Oh fucking Time-Out, *Nancy!*” She made the universal T-signal with her hands. “You don’t have to call me *Madam* when we’re alone together. I want to talk to Dan again! Oh never mind, let’s just go up to the bedroom. Where is it?”

I laughed, put my arm around her and led the way.

“To answer your questions,” I said, as she impatiently pulled me upstairs, “you need a special solvent to remove the boobs, and I don’t have it. And it *is* a perm, so I would need to practically shave my head to look like a man again. Also I’ve had an all-over waxing and am booked in for another one next week, and I’ve no idea when – or if – my eyebrows will grow back. And the glasses are fake to make me look older. Apart from all that – no, nothing’s permanent.”

I threw open the master bedroom door and followed her in.

“And by the way, I’m *not* fat. If anything, I’ve *lost* weight due to how hard I’ve been working all week. The prosthetics are intended to make me look fat in the breasts and arse to give me a proper hourglass shape, and to disguise my masculine shoulders and thick waist. I have to wear this horrible girdle-thing to get into my uniforms.”

I lifted my skirt to show her the dreaded waist-cincher. She nodded. Her sharp mind soon saw the Transformations rationale.

“Actually you look really sexy,” she said huskily. “Take your dress off. I want to see what’s underneath.”

“Are you sure? This is all a little awkward...”

“Come on, don’t be shy! We see each other in our undies every day.”

“That’s different. You’ve never seen me in *women’s* undies...”

“Hey, who’s the boss here?” she grinned and ran round behind me.

She tore my cap off and untied my apron. Then she unzipped my uniform and pulled my arms out of the sleeves. Next thing I knew, my dress was pooling around my feet.

“Pretty underslip!” she said. “Let’s see what’s under that.”

Moments later I was standing there in just bra, panties, girdle and hose, and feeling desperately self-conscious.

“God, you’re so sexy! I can’t believe that my husband dressing as a woman is making me so *hot!* It’s like that party where you went as a cheerleader, only ten times better, ‘cause it’s *real!*”

She demonstrated just *how* hot it was making her by pushing me down on the bed and smothering me with kisses again.

When we finally came up for air, she jumped off the bed, and picked up my maid's dress. She held it up against herself, examining her reflection in the wardrobe mirror. I propped myself up on my elbow and watched her.

"It suits you," I grinned. "Should we keep it for you for when my sabbatical is over?"

"Huh, keep it for *you*, you mean, *Nancy!*" she snorted. "It's far too big for me. But to be serious for a moment, I'm really surprised you're taking this so well. Before we started, you were sure you'd find it all too embarrassing. I mean, you're a rich, successful man. Isn't it humiliating to have to pretend to be a woman and a poor housemaid at that?"

"At first it was, yes, but I took it on as a challenge. I gradually got used to the clothes, and female movement, and so on, and after a few days' training I was thrown in at the deep end. I worked for a rich family with another maid. I had to be Nancy inside and out for four full days..."

"My God, you must have been terrified!"

"Well, yes. If I'd been exposed it would have been really serious. But I thought, no one here knows me as Dan. I'm getting away with being a woman, so I just have to act like a maid. You know – be respectful, work hard, scrub, vacuum, wash, iron. It was like amateur dramatics. And it was all going well. I was even starting to enjoy myself."

Jackie raised an eyebrow, a grin appearing on her face.

"Well, it was relaxing, mindless," I explained, "which is the whole point of taking a sabbatical, isn't it?" She nodded, enthusiastically. "And I got a real sense of accomplishment as we finished each room, and when I was putting clean, ironed clothes away in the various chests of drawers."

"What was the family like?" she asked.

"Really nice, actually. They were Americans, over here for his job. Three lovely kids."

Then I thought of the shock of seeing Sheldrake himself. "But the first evening, when the husband came home, I realised I knew him from work..." Jackie gasped. "But he clearly didn't recognise me."

"Which is hardly surprising. I didn't recognise you at first!"

"After that, my confidence grew. I even went for lunch with half a dozen other maids from the neighbourhood. They were really friendly and none of them had a clue I was anything other than one of them. So at first I was just acting, but it soon became second nature. Now Nancy seems to have developed her own personality."

"She certainly does. I couldn't believe how convincing you were this afternoon!"

"And I'm already feeling better, less stressed. You were right... about everything. I'm so sorry for ever shouting at you."

“S’all right, babe,” she said, and kissed me again. “But it will take more than a week to recover from ten years’ accumulated stress. You’re going to have to be Nancy for a while yet. You know that, right?”

“Yes, Madam. Whatever you say, Madam.”

“Damn right,” she said, slapping me playfully on my padded backside. “But you can chuck that stupid handbell in the bin. We don’t have slavery anymore in this country. If I want my husband, I will go and find him myself – and that applies even when he’s become my pretty maid!”

“Hardly pretty, Madam!” I smiled and curtsied. It was more difficult in just bra and knickers with no skirt to hold. She sat down on the bed again, laughing.

“Hey, I’ve just thought,” she went on, “Bill said you wouldn’t need to be seen as Nancy by anybody apart from me and him and the Transformations people. So much for his promises!”

“But no one else I’ve met had a clue I wasn’t just Nancy the maid, so it wasn’t a problem.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re taking it so well, but I’m going to have strong words with Bill when I see him again.”

She tossed my dress at me and got up to explore her new domain. I wriggled into my underslip. I watched her breathlessly while I put my uniform and apron back on. I replaced my cap and checked that it was straight in the dressing table mirror. My lipstick was badly smeared too. I would have to go back to the maid’s room to repair it.

Jackie opened the bathroom door and gave an approving nod. Then she looked round, puzzled.

“Where did you put my stuff?” She opened the wardrobe. “Aw, you unpacked for me! You didn’t have to do that,” she said.

“Of course, I did. I mean, of course *Nancy* did. She’s your lady’s maid, as well as your cook and cleaner.”

“Yeah, I suppose. Y’know, I think you’re right to put it like that. We probably need to be thinking of Dan and Nancy as separate people, especially if bloody Bill is going to drop in unannounced.”

“You’re right. We’ll be in trouble if he comes in and finds you doing the washing-up and Nancy with her feet up watching the football.”

She laughed. “Not likely – *you* hate football and *I* hate washing-up. Surely there’s a dishwasher?”

“There is, but Bill has disconnected it. He says a maid needs to get used to washing-up.”

“That’s ridiculous! Listen, he keeps saying I’m the boss, and I say *reconnect the dishwasher*. You’re doing enough menial jobs as it is.”

“Yes, Madam. Is it OK for a maid to be hopelessly in love with her mistress, Madam?”

“She better had be. OK, so you’ll be Nancy everywhere but here in the bedroom.”

“Yes, Madam. That *is* what this whole experiment is about after all.”

And I really didn’t want to give up being Nancy yet...

She had found her underwear and tights in her chest of drawers, and her nightie under the pillow. Then she went round to the other side of the bed.

“Hey, where’s your... er... nightie?” Before I could answer she had opened the other wardrobe and drawers and found them all empty. “In fact, where’s the rest of your stuff?”

“Well I don’t have much,” I said, “but it’s all in the maid’s room.” Her face was thunder. “Bill’s idea,” I added.

“Well go and get it *this minute!*” she ordered. “I don’t care who you are, Dan or Nancy; you’re sleeping with me!”

“Your wish is my command, Madam.”

“And when you get back we can work out how to get your... bottom padding thing... off.”

“It’s called an ‘abdominal prosthesis’,” I said.

“*Whatever!*”

I scurried out happily to fetch Nancy’s meagre belongings.

* * *

After moving my few items of clothing into the master bedroom, I suggested we have dinner – it was *coq au vin* with basmati rice, one of Jackie’s favourites. I had put it in the oven just before Bill left and it would be perfect now.

Jackie insisted that we eat together, despite Bill’s instructions, so I put on my best casual dress, and touched up my make-up a little for the evening. Jackie was impressed with my make-up skills. I left my waist-cincher off and managed to get the dress on with a little difficulty. I *had* obviously lost some weight round my waist.

Over dinner, and a very nice Merlot, Jackie made me describe my week. I told her how the first couple of days were humiliating, and demeaning, and I hated it, and hated Mrs McLaughlin, and had nearly walked out. She tutted.

Then I told her about the second day when my disguise was completed and I realised I might actually be able to pass as a woman. She quizzed me in detail about the exercises Miss Parr had put me through to learn to walk and talk and move like a woman, and how that had given me the confidence to carry on.

“Well, she must be really good,” Jackie said, “‘cause you haven’t put a foot wrong today. You were amazing when you were serving us tea – you moved just like a middle-aged woman, even down to your jiggling boobs. I won’t have any trouble treating you as my maid.”

“Thanks... I think. Getting the moves right was hard work, but I’ve had five more days’ practice since then. I guess it’s instinctive now.”

“I assume you will be able to turn it off... you know... afterwards?”

“I certainly hope so, or I’m going to get some funny looks at the office. But I think it’ll happen automatically when I’m back in men’s clothes – and shoes.”

“I must admit, I thought you’d be really resentful about becoming a housemaid – not just pretending to be a woman, but a servant too!”

“At first I thought I would too,” I agreed, “but I soon realised that no one would ever see Dan Richards under the Transformations disguise – it’s that good. Also they taught me everything about how to move like a woman; female gestures and mannerisms; how women talk and react. They encouraged me to throw myself into my performance. It’s been quite a challenge, but I guess it’s now become a matter of personal pride to fool everyone.”

“But how did you learn to be such a good maid?”

I described my on-the-job training at the Sheldrakes’ house, and how I started to enjoy myself for the first time that week. It was *fun* fooling everyone around me and making them believe I was someone else. I admitted that she had been right about how hard, mindless work, scrubbing and cleaning and ironing and vacuuming, would lower my stress levels. I had no other explanation for why pretending to be a woman and wearing a maid’s uniform would relax me so much.

I also told her all about Maggie; how much I had enjoyed the company of my fellow maids; and how well I seemed to fit in with them – more so than with my erstwhile colleagues.

“I feel much the same way about my co-workers at the university,” she said. “There’s only so many tenured posts available – just like there’s only a few partnerships at Atkinson Stern – so everyone around me is a rival. For academics it’s all about publication – and while I’m up to my eyes in admin I’m not getting any publishable work done.”

She paused thoughtfully. “So when can I meet this wonderful Maggie? Should we invite her round?”

“Well that would hardly be appropriate, would it?” I said. “Since when does a maid’s mistress invite another maid round for tea?”

“I thought I was supposed to be in charge?” she said, pretending to be cross. (At least I think she was pretending.) “Anyway, I’m jealous. How do I know you haven’t had it off with her?”

“Oh come on! She thinks I’m a female – a divorced working-class woman on her uppers, forced to become a cleaner. Maggie’s not a lesbian; she has a little girl. We’re just girlfriends!”

Jackie laughed. I blushed.

“Actually, I suppose there *is* a way,” I said. “This house was empty for ages and it’s really filthy. I spent last night and all day today cleaning, and I’ve barely scratched the surface. You could call the cleaning company and ask to hire her for a couple of days to help me sort this place out.”

“Good idea – I’ll do it first thing tomorrow. But how can I be sure we’ll get Maggie?”

“Well one of her regular clients is away next week, so she’s only working part-time. She’ll be glad of the extra hours, I expect. She’ll be free all day Tuesday and Thursday unless Home Counties Housekeeping have already found her another job. She’s a really good cook, so you could even ask her to do our evening meal on the day she comes.”

“OK, that’s settled. Shall we have another glass of wine, then turn in?”

“I have to do today’s diary entry for Bill first.”

“Oh yes – the diary. He’s asked me to start keeping one from tonight too.” She perked up. “Hey, let me see yours.”

I explained that I’d handed all the pages I’d done so far to Bill. She was disappointed.

“So tell me what you said in it. Did you mention me?”

I told her I had said I was concerned that my transformation might damage our relationship. How could she ever see me as her husband again after three weeks as Nancy?

She hastened to reassure me. I said she hadn’t seen me in my night attire yet.

She looked puzzled. “Well why don’t you show me?” she said. “Go and put your nightie on.”

“It’s not just that.” I touched my curly hair. “I told you – this is a perm...”

“My god, you have to wear *curlers!*”

“And a sleep bonnet.”

I went into the bathroom to start getting ready. She followed me in and watched me putting my dreaded curlers in.

“That is so sexy!” she screamed.

“You’re weird,” I said, with a grin.

“Don’t be cheeky, Nancy,” she said, laughing.

“How come I never knew how weird you were before all this?”

“I’m only just discovering it for myself. I suppose I must have a fetish – for pretty men in women’s underwear... and stuff.”

“So you think I might get lucky tonight?” I said. “Should I take my ‘abdominal prosthesis’ off?”

“Well if you do,” she answered, “we’ll probably *both* get lucky.”

So I did, and I washed it, and myself, and hung it up to dry on the shower rail. And when I came out of the bathroom in pink nightie, curlers, and sleep bonnet, Jackie gasped and pushed me down onto the bed again, flat on my back. She pulled my nightie up, got herself into position...

...and we *both* got lucky - twice.

* * *

Later that evening, we lay back in bed having done the deed.

“Well that’s a relief,” she said. “You were so convincing I was beginning to think you must have had some sort of operation. *Now* I know this fat sexy cleaning lady really is my beloved husband, who knows just what I like, and all my funny little ways.”

I laughed and turned her over. My hands reached round her to cup her boobs, *my* boobs pressing into her back.

Nancy’s Diary – Week 2, Sunday

Nothing much to report today, Bill. As you intended, I spent most of the day cleaning.

You saw me serving afternoon tea for my mistress. I trust my service was satisfactory?

After you left, Jackie called a ‘time out’ so that we could catch up. But don’t worry, I’ll be back in full Nancy mode tomorrow.

Week 2 - Monday

I was up at six again, without needing to set the alarm. My sleep patterns are now ‘early to bed, early to rise’, like any housemaid. In contrast, Jackie has never been good at getting up in the morning. I don’t know if I disturbed her, but if I did, she just rolled over and went back to sleep.

We had agreed I needed to maintain the ‘maid’s room’ in case of visitors, especially Bill. So I left my uniforms, underwear, curlers, hairbrush and cosmetics in there, and put my nightie under the pillow.

This morning I had a quick shower in the family bathroom. Then I removed my shower cap, took my curlers out, brushed my hair, and did my make-up.

I put on my prosthesis with clean underwear and a fresh uniform and went down to the kitchen.

I had some cereal and orange juice and set about making breakfast for my mistress. She hadn't given me any instructions the night before, so I made what Dan used to do on alternate Sundays and what I knew she liked: scrambled egg and smoked salmon on wholemeal toast.

I took it up to serve her breakfast in bed on the stroke of seven o'clock. I knocked loudly and entered, without waiting for a reply.

"Morning, Madam," I said cheerfully.

I put the tray down on the bed and threw the curtains open. There was a groan from the bed.

I picked up the tray again and stood over her. Jackie stretched and rubbed her eyes. When she finally got them open and saw me, her patient maid, standing there, she laughed.

"Breakfast in bed? That's brilliant, babe, thanks! So you're really going through with this whole 'Nancy the maid' thing?"

"Of course, Madam," I said. "That's what we're here for, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," she said. "Otherwise there'd be little point in moving half-way across town just to live with my cross-dressing husband."

"Excuse me for correcting you, Madam," I said, "but your husband, Dan, isn't a cross-dresser. He wouldn't want you to mix him up with me, Nancy, your maid."

"Funny," she said, "he certainly *looked* like a cross-dresser in his nightie and curlers last night." She laughed. "But, OK, as long as transvestite Dan's back at bedtime, I'm happy to live with Nancy the rest of the time."

I'm not sure she understood. I *had* to think of Dan and Nancy as separate people. It was the only way I could cope with the embarrassment of this whole role-playing experience. But I let it go.

"Very good, Madam. Do you have any instructions for me for today?"

"Uh, no, I don't think so. What did you have in mind? I've never had a maid before, you know."

"Should I run you a bath? What clothes should I lay out for you today? Can you tell me what time you'll be back this evening? Is there anything special you'd like for dinner? Are you expecting to entertain at all this week?"

"Whoa, whoa, one question at a time! I should be home by six. I'll leave dinner to you – you know what I like. And what's that about 'entertaining'? I thought it would be just you and me while we're here. Do you mean that you don't mind meeting people as Nancy?"

I had to drop out of 'Nancy mode' a little to answer that question. I sat down on the bed.

“Well I don’t think either Bill or Dan ever expected my transformation to be so convincing,” I said in Dan’s voice. “I’ve met lots of people as Nancy this last week, and no one seemed to have the slightest notion that I was really a man. Mind you, I don’t think it would be a good idea for you to bring home anyone who knows Dan, but otherwise please feel free to invite people back here. I’ll be happy to serve your guests. It might even help your career.”

“Yes, that sounds like a good idea,” she mused. “Let me think about it. There’s a big faculty meeting coming up. We could offer a drinks and nibbles buffet afterwards, couldn’t we?”

I stood up again and clasped my hands in front of my apron, switching my ‘maid mode’ back on.

“Yes, Madam. Oh, and be sure to let me know of any day when you want to be especially smart, so that I can wash and press your best clothes.”

“OK, but don’t worry about any of that for now. I’ll be in the labs all day today, so I’ll just take a quick shower and wear my jeans and an old top. But it’s great having a maid! I may just keep you.”

I curtsied with a smile.

“I’m not sure about the curtsying and the ‘Madam’ stuff though,” she said. “It makes me a little uncomfortable. Can’t you drop all that when we’re alone?”

“I’ll try, Madam, but it’s become kind of second nature now. If I drop it with you, I might forget myself when I’m serving your guests.”

That didn’t sound convincing even to me. After all, we hadn’t made plans for there to be any guests yet. It’s just that... curtsying and calling my mistress ‘Madam’ was part of being Nancy the maid, and that’s who I was now, wasn’t it?

Jackie sighed. “Oh that reminds me,” she said, “I was going to see if we can get Maggie for a couple of days, wasn’t I?”

* * *

Jackie phoned Home Counties Housekeeping before she left for work that morning. She was able to arrange for Maggie to come to us for the next day, Tuesday. She could also come on Thursday, those being the two days when she wasn’t working for the Sheldrakes. Jackie arranged for a minicab to pick her up and take her home both days.

That reminded me that I had no transport. Dan’s Porsche and our BMW X5 were locked up in the garage back home, and with no licence in her name Nancy couldn’t have driven either of them anyway, at least not without Dan risking exposure.

So if I wanted to go out, I would have to rely on public transport. I obviously couldn’t carry many bags on the bus, so our weekly big grocery shopping would either have to be ordered online and delivered, or I’d have to ask my mistress to do the driving. Either way she would

have to be involved as I had no computer access. I wasn't used to these constraints on my personal freedom and mobility.

I spent the rest of the day cleaning, mostly on the ground floor in the kitchen and utility room. It wasn't as enjoyable doing it alone and I didn't make as much progress as I'd expected, but at least I had reduced the risk of food poisoning. I looked forward to working with Maggie again.

Jackie was home at six, as she had promised. I served dinner at seven, still wearing my grey uniform.

"I thought you were going to change when we sat down to dinner?" she asked, as we were eating.

"I thought about that, but we have to remember that Bill could turn up at any time. He may try to catch us out. I think I should stay in uniform until we can say your maid is 'off duty'."

"And when would that be?"

"When I've finished tidying up after dinner, I think."

"But I was going to help," she said. "You did all the cooking, and you've been on your feet scrubbing and vacuuming all day. I can at least rinse the pots and load the dishwasher."

"I think you're missing the point, Madam, if I may say so without being impertinent. All of that is my *job*. You go out to work. You're the family breadwinner. I'm just the maid. I cook and clean. I'm *supposed* to look after the house so you can relax when you get home."

"But I feel guilty sitting around while you work."

"Not much of a dominatrix, are you, Madam?" I laughed. "Don't forget to put that in your diary tonight."

"Well, OK, but please put on a nice dress when you've finished and join me in the sitting room. We can have a drink."

"I don't really have any clean dresses at the moment. I only had three to start with. I'll try and do some laundry tomorrow."

"Well, we'll have to go shopping this weekend and get you some more clothes. It'll be fun – and we'll go as *girlfriends*, not mistress and maid."

"Hang on, I don't need any more dresses... er, Madam. I'm only going to be Nancy for three more weeks!"

"Are you, though?" she asked with a twinkle in her eye. I ignored her implication.

"In any case, Nancy gets all her clothes from charity shops, not posh boutiques," I said.

“Well I think your mistress can buy you at least one nice dress, as a reward for all your hard work. If you insist, we’ll go to M & S rather than Oxford Street.”

At Jackie’s suggestion, after tidying up in the kitchen I changed into a clean nightie and put my curlers in. We cuddled on the sofa, read our magazines, watched TV, and drank red wine till bedtime.

Her hands kept worming their way up under my nightie and into my panties, but of course she didn’t find anything of interest there. She insisted I remove my prosthesis at bedtime again, and I made no objection.

We both filled in our diaries for the day, comparing notes for the first time. Bill had asked us not to collaborate, but I’ve never kept anything from my wife and I wasn’t about to start now. Jackie said that she liked having a maid but she couldn’t imagine being cruel to her, especially if she was her husband!

In my entry I simply reiterated that I was enjoying the relaxed and undemanding life of being a domestic servant. I was happy to obey my mistress’s instructions – not that she had actually given me any yet – but I still didn’t feel *submissive* in any way.

Frankly, I was getting bored with the diary thing and was running out of things to say.

Week 2 - Tuesday

As on Monday morning I was up an hour before Jackie. Fully made up, uniformed, capped and aproned, I served her breakfast in bed.

This time she let me run her a bath and lay out her clothes. She was going into the Department for various budget meetings, so I put out clean underwear and tights, a frilly blouse, and a pinstripe skirt suit.

I helped her dress, like a proper lady’s maid, and I also did her hair for her, although she had to show me what to do as ‘hairdressing for your mistress’ hadn’t been covered in my maid training. But her gran was a hairdresser and Jackie learnt everything from her at an early age. She paid her way through college by giving professional-standard hairdos to all her friends. She still mostly looked after her own hair and resented paying for hairdresser appointments.

“This is wonderful, Nancy darling. I don’t think I’ve ever managed to look so smart for a Departmental meeting. The powers-that-be will have to start treating me as one of the ‘grown-ups’ now. I think I’ll train you to do my hair all the time from now on, and I can do yours. It’ll be great.”

Yes, Madam. I’m always keen to learn new skills.”

Did this mean that she was expecting *Dan* to do her hair when this was all over? If so, I’d need to swear her to secrecy. I’d be laughed out of Atkinson Stern by the macho bruisers there if anyone found out.

Anyway, between us we got her looking fabulous. I tried to be Nancy throughout, curtsying and calling her 'Madam', but Jackie kept laughing and joking with me as though I were still her husband, or at least her best girlfriend.

Maggie arrived at about eight o'clock. I made coffee and we sat down in the kitchen. We were nattering away about Doreen and Sally and the other girls, and catching up on the developments in their lives, when Jackie came in and I was able to introduce them. I stood up, straightened my skirt and my apron, and curtsyed.

"This is Maggie, Madam," I said. "She taught me everything I know about housekeeping."

"Lovely to meet you at last, Maggie," Jackie said. "Nancy has told me a lot about you."

Maggie was beaming. "Thank you so much for thinking of me this week, ma'am," she said. "The extra couple of days makes quite a difference. I often struggle a bit when my regular clients are away."

"No, thank *you*, Maggie. You'll be helping us enormously. This place was awful when we moved in and poor Nancy's been working her fingers to the bone to get it straight."

Jackie sat down and joined us for a coffee before setting off for the university. She and Maggie hit it off immediately.

"I understand that Nancy has asked you to cook for us tonight," Jackie said. "You *will* stay and eat with us, won't you?"

"That would be lovely, Mrs Richards. Thank you," she said. "I'll let my mum know I'll be back a little later than usual."

* * *

After Jackie had left and Maggie and I had finished our coffee I showed her around the house, and what I'd already done. She nodded approvingly.

"There's an awful lot of rubbish to get rid of," she observed. "What day do the binmen come?"

Of course I had no idea, and I realised I couldn't go onto the local council's website to find out as I had no internet access.

"Why don't you pop next door and ask your neighbour?" she suggested.

"Good idea," I said, thinking, *Great, someone else I have to meet as Nancy!* Still, I wasn't too concerned. Nobody had seen through me yet.

So I slipped my cardigan on and went out to call on our neighbour. She was clearly a little surprised to open the door to a uniformed maid but she was very friendly. It turned out that the refuse collectors normally came on a Wednesday afternoon, so Maggie and I had to spend most of the morning just clearing rubbish. Fortunately we found several crumpled but empty cardboard boxes around the house, so the growing pile by the bins stayed reasonably tidy.

After the clear-out we worked away solidly all morning, scrubbing, wiping and vacuuming to easy-listening tunes on Maggie's little radio. We managed to get the master bedroom, the landing and one of the other bedrooms up to Maggie's high standard. At about one o'clock we sat down to a little lunch I'd prepared.

"This is your first week working for Mrs Richards, is it, dear?" Maggie asked.

"Yes," I said. "It was arranged just before I came to work with you at the Sheldrakes'."

"Do you know what she does?"

"Something at the University. I think she's some sort of scientist."

"And where's her husband?"

"Oh he's on a – what do you call it? – sabbatical? She's expecting him to be away for about three months."

I was quite enjoying this. We were just two women gossiping about our employer, as we maids do.

"Well it's a good thing she has you to keep her company, isn't it?" she said.

Too right, I thought.

"Anyway, I think you're very lucky with your mistress," Maggie said. "She's lovely."

"Really?" I said. I thought she was lovely too, of course, but I was interested to know why she thought so. "I would have said she's about the same as Mrs Sheldrake, isn't she? I mean, I've no complaints, but all mistresses are pretty much the same from a maid's point of view, aren't they?"

"Oh no, dear," she said. "Some employers treat us like dirt." I nodded to encourage her to continue. "Some rich people can be horrible, especially if they're 'new money'. In general, the older the family, the better they treat their servants."

I laughed. "I'm sure you're right," I said. "You've much more experience with employers than I do."

"Yes," she agreed. "So what did you do before?"

She was smiling, but with a penetrating look. I paused, wondering how to answer without getting myself caught in a web of lies.

"It's just that I'm beginning to think of us as friends," she went on, "and you haven't really told me very much about yourself. But I'd understand if there are things you don't want to talk about. We all have secrets..."

"No, it's not that," I said, "and I *do* think of us as friends. In fact, these days, you may even be my *best* friend..."

I suppose this was stretching the truth a little, but Jackie and Bill were *Dan's* friends, not Nancy's.

Maggie said nothing, waiting patiently for me to continue.

"I – I used to work in an office. It wasn't a very friendly atmosphere, and I suppose I must have got stressed out." She looked alarmed. "Oh, I don't mean I had a breakdown or anything, but I think I *might* have had if I hadn't got out when I did. I find being a domestic much more relaxing, and my new colleagues are much nicer."

She smiled. "But it must be harder to make ends meet. A maid doesn't earn anywhere near as much as a senior secretary."

"No, but Mrs Richards wanted a *live-in* maid, with her husband being away, so having board and lodging paid for makes a big difference. I don't have to pay for my uniforms either, so that really cuts down on the cost of clothes."

"How long have you been separated from your husband? That can't have helped with the stress."

I didn't want to go there. I would have to make too much stuff up. I suppose that was a strange reaction as *everything* about me was a lie, but I wanted to stick as much as possible to some version of the truth. My expression must have changed because she rushed to interrupt before I could speak.

"Sorry, dear, that was too nosey." She grinned. "Occupational hazard with us gossipy cleaning ladies!"

"No, it's OK. It's just that I haven't given up hope regarding my... marriage, so I don't know exactly *what* will happen..."

I trailed off. Again, there was a thread of truth here, running through the big lie. I had been afraid that seeing her husband dressed as a maid, curtsying, and calling her Madam, might have caused Jackie to lose all her respect for me, and that certainly wouldn't have been good for our marriage, but – weirdly – she seemed to be loving this whole bizarre experience...

Maggie must have sensed that was all she getting for the moment.

"Anyway, we'd better get on, hadn't we?" she said. She went to the sink and started filling a plastic bucket with soapy water. "Two more bedrooms to do, and the upstairs bathroom, and then we'll need to get on with dinner. We'll do the ground floor on Thursday, shall we?"

* * *

That all went as planned and by five o'clock the whole of the upstairs was sparkling clean. We were in the kitchen. Maggie had reviewed all the food available from the previous weekend's shopping and selected a recipe. Now I was chopping vegetables while she was preparing a roast.

“There may be too much here for the three of us,” she said, “but you can finish it off tomorrow, in sandwiches or with a salad.”

Jackie returned a little after six and joined us in the kitchen. I rushed to fetch her a glass of her favourite wine, which she slurped happily. I was dying to ask her how her day had gone, as I knew there had been some important meetings, but that was hardly my place now. I would have to wait until she and I were alone.

But she had seen my face and, thoughtful as ever, volunteered, “Well I’ve had a good day, girls. All our proposals were accepted and we’ve got budget cover for the next two years.”

Maggie and I congratulated her warmly, though of course as humble domestic servants we couldn’t possibly hope to understand the implications of what she said. (But Dan was very pleased.)

“I’m going to have a bath,” Jackie said. “How long till dinner?”

“About half an hour, ma’am,” said Maggie. “But there’s no rush. It will be fine for a while after that.”

She turned back to the meat. Jackie winked, blew me a kiss behind Maggie’s back, and left us to it.

* * *

Dinner was excellent – both the food and the conversation. I stayed in my uniform to keep Maggie company. We were like three old girlfriends chatting, rather than a rich lady and her two maids. I called for a taxi to take Maggie home at a quarter past eight.

“It was quite interesting to see you two together this morning,” Jackie said after Maggie had gone.

We were in the bedroom and I was taking my uniform off. I made a mental note to do some laundry tomorrow; I was running out of clean underwear and uniforms.

I was down to my bra and knickers. I caught sight of my portly figure, especially my huge rear and fat thighs, in the wardrobe mirror. I felt a little embarrassed in front of Jackie. We both knew it was all padding, but still...

“You seemed so much alike,” Jackie went on, “two plump, middle-aged, working-class women, nattering away.” I frowned. She laughed. “I felt quite left out.”

“Well that’s not surprising. After all a super-smart professional woman like you has nothing in common with semi-literate cleaning ladies like Maggie and me,” I said sarcastically.

“Snarky!” she said. “Anyway it wasn’t like that this evening. I can see why you two get on so well. She’s really nice.”

I had mastered undoing my bra by now and dropped it and my panties in the laundry basket for the maid – me, of course – to deal with tomorrow. I put my nightie on.

“She’s had a tough life,” I said. I told her about Maggie’s domestic circumstances.

“Perhaps we could hire her when this is all over?”

“Hardly! We can’t afford for her ever to meet Dan. She and I have spent five entire working days together. She’d recognise me in an instant! In fact, it’s a good thing all our old photographs are still back home.”

“I suppose so,” she agreed. “By the way, have you thought about what to put in your diary tonight?”

I grimaced. “Not really. My first entries earlier in the week were easy. Everything was new and different; my emotions were all over the place; and I had lots to say. But I seem to have settled into a routine now, so there’s nothing interesting for Bill.”

“Do you feel submissive yet, maid?” she asked, with a grin.

“Not at all. I *get* being a servant, and I’m surprised to find that I don’t mind the life at all. It’s actually liberating, having no responsibility – especially as I know I can give it all up and go back to being a miserable rich man whenever I want. But I’m actually *happy* at the moment, and I think I’m getting quite good at being a maid.”

Jackie nodded vigorously.

“Anyway I’m not interested in bondage or chastity or anything like that,” I continued, “and I’m quite sure it would *destroy* us as a couple, so I’m glad you’re not inclined that way either. I guess from Bill’s point of view, the whole project is a failure.”

“It’s just as useful to *disprove* a theory,” said the scientist in Jackie. “Maybe we’re showing that the whole domme-sub thing has to be something in your nature. It can’t be induced by role-playing.”

“Yes, it’s early days yet of course, but I don’t think it will happen with us, because the domme-sub relationship is basically about sado-masochism. I’m not a masochist, and you’re definitely not a sadist. I can just about see you behaving like a domme if you thought I *wanted* you to treat me badly, but I’m just not into that. As far as I’m concerned, Nancy may only be a cleaning lady, but that’s a perfectly respectable way to make a living, at least for an unskilled woman down on her luck. I’m trying to live her life with dignity, and I certainly don’t want to be mistreated for it – and I wouldn’t tolerate it.”

“Well I guess that’s our diary entries for tonight sorted out then,” she said.

Week 2 – Wednesday

Our morning routine was the same as on the first two days of the week. I was happy to be up early, smartly dressed in my uniform and made up, and serving my mistress breakfast.

“We’ve run out of smoked salmon, so I’ve done some crispy bacon. Is that satisfactory, Madam?” I asked.

"It's great. I wouldn't want the same thing every day anyway. I just love you serving me breakfast in bed, but I must make it up to you after this is all over."

"There's no need, Madam. This is what we signed up for."

"Yes, but you're doing all the hard work, and I'm just lying back and enjoying it. It's not fair."

"But you work very hard at the office. Anyway, I thought I'd been 'lying back and enjoying it'!"

She giggled. "Yes, if this week has taught us nothing else, we've learned that sex is great with me on top."

I laughed with her – and she was right. With my big heavy boobs and butt, it was much more comfortable for us both with me on the bottom. It put Jackie in control, but I had no problem with that. It certainly didn't make me 'submissive' or her a 'domme'.

"Shall I run your bath, Madam?" I asked. "What clothes should I lay out today?"

"Yes to the bath, but don't worry about clothes. I'm going to work from home this morning."

"Well I'll put out your clean underwear anyway." I grinned. "I quite like doing that."

"And I can't even call you a pervert," she smiled, "with you dressed the way you are."

* * *

While Jackie was in the bath I gathered up all our dirty laundry and went downstairs to put the first load in. My cheap bras and knickers were all fine in a hot white wash, but I removed Madam's delicates for hand washing. I found this job a little too... um, *stimulating*, and I could feel my member hardening. But the prosthesis was up to the task of restraining it without causing too much pain. Jackie appeared in the utility room while I was doing this and sensed my excitement.

* * *

"Oh, that is so sexy – my handsome husband, dressed as my pretty housemaid, and washing my smalls by hand. It makes me want to ravage you here and now on the laundry room floor, Nancy darling."

"Well there's nothing stopping you, Madam. You *are* my mistress after all."

"And it's very tempting, but we've both just got washed and dressed. I'll keep the image in my mind's eye for later. Listen, I've set my laptop up in the study..."

"Oh but, Madam, we haven't cleaned in there yet! We're planning to do it tomorrow."

"Don't worry, it's OK as it is for now. What I wanted to say is, I've got it open at the supermarket web page. Should we do an internet shop for next week's groceries?"

“Oh yes, good idea, Madam! We can have them delivered on Friday afternoon, to keep the weekend clear.”

“Also we can check your – I mean, *Dan’s* work Inbox, just in case anything important has come up. I’m a little surprised you haven’t already asked me to do that.”

“Any emails to Mr Richards are none of my business,” I said firmly. “I’m just Nancy the maid.” She looked sceptical. “The whole point of a sabbatical is to get away from your normal working life completely,” I added.

“Right,” she said, clearly unconvinced. “OK, let’s go and do the shopping. Then there’s one other thing I want to do. I really don’t like your hairdo. I’m pretty sure I can do better. Your hair’s getting long enough for a proper perm. I went back home yesterday afternoon and got all my old equipment from the garage. I think it still works. Can you help me carry it in from the car?”

So we submitted an online grocery order. Then Jackie insisted on checking Dan’s Inbox. It just had a few research papers in it, but I was surprised to find I wasn’t interested in them in the least.

So we set up her portable hairdressing salon in one of the upstairs bedrooms. I took my uniform off and put on Jackie’s negligée, and for the next hour I had another hairdressing lesson, this time with myself as the subject.

Jackie used much better products than they had at Transformations, including a very expensive ‘natural’ blonde tint. She scornfully dismissed my objections that Nancy couldn’t afford an expensive hairdo.

“Don’t you want to see just how good you can look as Nancy? I’m going to do your make-up too.”

I didn’t argue. I don’t suppose any woman actually *wants* to look dowdy and middle-aged. I was stuck with my figure of course, but perhaps Jackie could improve on everything else. When she’d finished, I was astonished.

It was a little more difficult to attach my maid’s cap to my new bouffant hairdo. We had to use twice as many hair grips. We then spent far too long admiring my appearance in the mirror. Jackie had a very strange look in her eyes. I could swear her mouth was watering.

“I told you you’d be pretty,” she chortled.

“I’d better put my uniform back on,” I said. “I don’t look like a maid; I look like the mother of the bride getting ready for the wedding. What on earth will Maggie say tomorrow?”

“I’d better get on with my real work,” she said, huskily. “I’ve got *tons* of reports to write.”

“Me too,” I said. “I’ve got *tons* of laundry to do.”

* * *

Jackie went into the office in the afternoon, while I spent most of the day washing and ironing – my least favourite maid chore.

I did it in the sitting room with the TV on. Nothing like mindless afternoon programming to make the housework pass quickly. It was a soap opera. I kept imagining myself as the mother of one of the out of control young women characters. I realised with a start that Dan would never have watched this sort of programme. It was weird that as Nancy I was enjoying it. Just how deep were the changes I was experiencing?

Jackie phoned at about half-past four to suggest she brought in dinner. I was tired enough not to argue, although it was hardly in the spirit of our role play.

We had a quiet evening with a Chinese takeaway and wine.

By ten o'clock we were sprawled out on the sofa in some disarray. I was still in uniform, although Jackie had unzipped my dress and was playing with my bra strap. The game would be up if Bill came round now and caught us. Through my alcoholic haze I wondered whether he had kept a key to the rented house.

"So, maid, you have to do everything I say?" Jackie said tipsily just after we opened the second bottle.

"Yes, Madam."

"OK then - go and buy me a Ferrari."

"I'm sorry, Madam, but your maid can't buy you an expensive car. You'll have to ask your husband when he gets back."

"Well, how about you signing a Power of Attorney? Then I can buy a Ferrari myself."

"Why would you want Power of Attorney over your maid's assets? She doesn't have anything."

She laughed.

"Anyway we... er, that is, you and your husband, Dan, have a joint account. You don't actually *want* a Ferrari, do you, Madam?" I asked.

"Of course not, silly maid!" she laughed. "What would be the point? Where would I drive it?"

"Track days? The German autobahn?"

She snorted. "I can see you've been thinking about it! You'll get a supercar over my dead body, maid!"

"You're such a harsh mistress."

"I know," she said, climbing up on top of me and burying my face in her naked boobs.

During our evenings together we would normally tell each other about our days, and Jackie entertained me with the Astrophysics Department's office politics; the continual problems she had with a visiting American professor; and her struggles with her latest research paper. I realised I had nothing new to tell her about my day. A maid's life just isn't interesting to a high-powered career woman.

We watched the ten o'clock news and went upstairs not long after. I had to ask Jackie to help me with the curlers for my new perm.

We went to bed and just cuddled. She seemed to enjoy kneading my fleshy thighs and buttocks, not realising I couldn't actually feel anything. I hadn't taken my prosthesis off and she had been too drunk to ask.

Week 2 – Thursday

Jackie was up early as she had to get a train down to London for a meeting. So we had breakfast together in the kitchen. She was running late. She grabbed her briefcase and threw her arms around me.

"Bye, gorgeous!" she said. "God, you're so sexy in your little uniform!"

She planted a big kiss on my lips and ran out to a waiting taxi.

I ran to fix my lipstick before Maggie arrived. When I opened the door to her, she goggled at my new hairdo.

"You look great!" she gushed. "Where did you get it done? You must have been saving up."

I blushed and admitted that my mistress had done it.

"Didn't I say you were lucky?" she laughed.

We worked on the ground floor rooms all morning. Since I had already dusted and vacuumed, our main focus was on the windows and paintwork. We also had to deep-clean the sitting room carpet, which had many unidentified stains. That was hard work, and when we gratefully sat down for lunch there was only the kitchen left to do.

"I hope we get the chance to work together again after this, love," Maggie said. "I've really enjoyed your company."

"Likewise," I said, "but I'm not sure how that can happen."

"Actually, I do have a suggestion... if you're interested."

"Sure," I nodded. This didn't seem likely, but it couldn't hurt to listen.

"Well, this place is in great shape now, isn't it? It won't take all your time keeping it clean."

"No, but I have to do the laundry, the shopping, and the cooking..."

“Even so, you could still spare maybe three mornings a week – if your mistress agrees, of course.”

“I suppose so,” I agreed. Where was this going?

“Well on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, I work at the Travellers’ Rest Hotel, before going on to the Sheldrakes in the afternoons. I’m pretty sure I could get you the same shifts. We’d be working together three mornings a week!”

“What would I be doing?”

“Housekeeping – you know, cleaning the rooms, making the beds, putting a little chocolate on the pillows,” she smiled. “It’s good money too. Wouldn’t it be nice to put a little extra aside?”

I thought it over. Could I actually do this? It would be taking the whole experiment much further, but wouldn’t that be a good thing? What would Jackie think? I’m sure she wouldn’t stop me, *but what would she think?*

“It’s a wonderful idea, Maggie,” I said, my heart in my mouth. “Can you ask your boss at the hotel if they have an opening? I – I’ll talk to Mrs Richards tonight.”

* * *

Maggie had supervised the dinner and it looked delicious, but she couldn’t arrange a babysitter for that evening so she wasn’t able to stay and eat with us. When Jackie got home I was in the kitchen stirring gravy. She flung her arms around me from behind, massaging my boobs and padded bum.

I took the opportunity to ask her about working with Maggie at the Travellers’ Rest. She was amazed – and amused.

“So you want to be a *hotel maid?*” she hooted. “Well, why not? You’d be great! You realise you’ll be working for someone much better at ordering servant girls around than I am... and who isn’t in love with you?”

Her hands moved around and up my uniform skirt. I giggled.

“Seriously, you’ll get the chance to see what it’s *really* like to be a servant. Are you sure you want that? Are you sure you’ll be able to stand it?”

“That’s one of the reasons I want to do it, Madam. You know you don’t always treat me as your maid – even outside the bedroom – which kind of undermines our whole reason for being here. Obviously I don’t mind that. In fact I’ve always felt a little uncomfortable with what this whole silly project may be doing to our relationship.”

She hastened to reassure me. I persisted.

“But if I do this, that won’t matter as much. We can be who we really are at home, and I can get my dose of subservience at the hotel.”

Week 2 – Friday

Maggie called just after Jackie left for work. Her manager at the hotel was prepared to offer me three shifts next week on Maggie's recommendation, and promised that if I did a good job they might make it a regular thing. I was thrilled, but as had happened so often lately, the Dan part of me sat up and wondered why I was so pleased about willingly taking on additional menial work – and humiliation.

My shifts would be the same as Maggie's so that she could keep an eye on me and train me to make up the rooms to 'Travellers' Rest standards'. I would need to be there at 8.30 and work from nine till one, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. This would fit well enough with Jackie's schedule. I could still make her breakfast and help her get ready in the mornings.

When she got back that evening she congratulated me on getting a new job. I couldn't help feeling a little surge of pride.

"I can give you a lift to the hotel in the morning," she said. "It's on my way, isn't it?"

"That would be very kind of you. Thank you, Madam."

"Oh but you'll have to get a bus back here. Are you sure you'll be all right on public transport dressed as Nancy?"

"I'm sure I'll manage, Madam," I said. "I'm quite confident in my appearance now."

"No, I mean, you're not afraid of... you know... being attacked? A single woman, alone, vulnerable?"

"But it will be the middle of the day – broad daylight, in the middle of town..." I stopped as she was grinning stupidly. "Oh, I see – you were joking. Very droll, Madam."

She was laughing now. "Yeah! Anyone who assaulted you... well he'd never attack another woman in his life, that's for sure!"

* * *

Bill called round (without warning) that evening at about eight o'clock. I rushed to answer the door, expecting it to be him as no one else knew us here. Fortunately I was still in uniform and we were both fully in role. I think he was disappointed. He'd probably hoped to find us eating together, a flagrant flouting of the rules.

But we had finished dinner and Jackie was watching a documentary, a glass of chardonnay in her hand. I had been in the kitchen clearing up. I still had my rubber gloves on.

"Do come in, sir," I said respectfully. "Madam is in the sitting room."

"Thank you, Nancy," he said. "Please would you join us... er, as soon as you've finished your chores?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "May I offer you any refreshments?"

“No, thank you. I can’t stay for long.”

I showed him into the sitting room and went back to the kitchen. It took me about another ten minutes to wipe down all the surfaces and load the dishwasher. I would have to wait till Bill had gone before putting it on though, as he was expecting me to wash the dishes by hand. I just hoped he wouldn’t come into the kitchen.

I stripped off my gloves. Then on an impulse I sneaked back to listen at the sitting room door. I suppose I was irrationally afraid that Bill and Jackie were engaged in some sort of conspiracy against me.

“...so he’s doing really well as a maid,” I heard Bill saying, “but what about his attitude?”

“How do you mean?” Jackie asked.

“Well does he *behave* as your servant? That’s really important for the experiment. Does he do as you tell him, as a maid should, or does he challenge you as your husband?”

“Is *she* cheeky, you mean?” Jackie emphasised the feminine pronoun. “No, Nancy is an *excellent* maid. Very respectful – she only ever calls me ‘Madam’ – and she caters to my every whim. She asks my permission before doing anything. She thinks of things I need before I do and makes suggestions – but always courteously. My life has become so much easier with her looking after me. I’ve got a lot more done at the office without having to worry about looking after the home.”

“So Dan left you to do all the housework, shopping, cooking, etc? I always *thought* he took advantage of you round the house.”

Bastard! I wasn’t that bad! Was I?

“Well, we very careful to split everything 50-50 when we were first married. And, yes, he *has* slipped a little recently, but that was because of his job. He’s been working sixty-hour weeks ever since he was put up for Partner, and I guess he’s needed me to pick up the slack back home. I don’t mind.”

How lucky was I to find this woman! I’m going to make it up to her even after Nancy goes away and Dan comes back.

“But surely...” Bill tried to interrupt.

“No, Bill, it’s working out for us. We’re well on the way to being seriously rich. We have a two million-pound apartment, three expensive cars, and we can afford exotic holidays, not that Dan’s job has let us take one. You know we had next to nothing when we started – and it’s all because of his work. Astrophysics lecturers don’t make a lot, and I wouldn’t do much better even with a full professorship. And then there’s children to think about. The only thing I’m really worried about is his health, and that’s why I’m so glad for this study of yours. It’s giving him a proper rest – well, *mentally* anyway. *Physically* Nancy works harder than Dan ever has in his life, but she seems to love it!”

I'd heard enough. I knocked.

"Come in!" Jackie called.

"Please sit down, Nancy," said Bill.

I sat down on the room's only hard-backed chair, sweeping my uniform skirt underneath me. I sat, respectfully silent with my eyes cast down and my hands folded over my apron. Momentarily Bill looked astonished at my subservience. He quickly recovered.

"Now you'll remember that I said I'd need you to fill out a questionnaire each at the end of each week. I have them here. I'll leave them with you and come back on Sunday to collect them."

"Can you make it around lunchtime?" Jackie said. "Sunday is Nancy's day off, so she might not be here, and I'm going out later."

This was all news to me. Where did she think I was going to go?

"Er, yes, I can manage that, I think," he said. Obviously Bill was also curious what Nancy might do on her day off, but he didn't ask. "About twelve?" he suggested. "Now, it would be better if you completed the questionnaires independently – no collusion – but it doesn't matter too much. The important thing is: please be completely honest. Remember I've promised you total anonymity. There's no need to be embarrassed over any of your answers."

I wasn't impressed with his commitment to 'total anonymity'. That had already been compromised when Nancy was exposed to so many outsiders, but I supposed that might not have been Bill's idea. From the look on her face Jackie was thinking the same.

We took our respective questionnaires without comment. I sensed that the earlier conversation I had shamelessly eavesdropped on had left her slightly irked with Bill and I certainly had nothing to say to him, so there were no further pleasantries.

He saw that he wasn't going to get anything more out of Jackie, and he certainly wasn't going to pass the time of day with the maid. So he just asked us for our latest diary entries; grunted a little when he saw their brevity and lack of useful insights; and took his leave.

As soon as he'd gone, I asked her what she meant about his visit on Sunday.

"Well, it's your day off, so you won't be in uniform. There's no reason for you to answer the door, or make tea, or call him 'sir'. And you can't be Dan, can you? I mean, not with your hair, and bum, and those lovely boobs. So we can hardly sit down, the three of us, and return to our normal friendly relationship. I just think it would be better if you're not around when he comes."

"You're right," I agreed. "It would be really awkward being Nancy with Bill, but not being the maid."

“If you like, I’ll tell him you’ve gone out with your new cleaning lady friends, but if you want to stay in, you can hide upstairs till he’s gone.”

* * *

Later Jackie and I poured over the questionnaires he left behind.

Questionnaire for the Mistress

- Are you comfortable with your role as your husband’s Mistress and employer?
- Do you see him as a woman, and your maid servant, or just as your husband in a silly costume?
- Do you have difficulty giving your maid orders?
- Are you satisfied with your maid’s performance? If not, what steps have you taken to improve it?
- What are now your feelings toward your maid? Love? Hate? Sympathy? Contempt? Disgust? Or do you have no feelings toward her at all – she’s just the maid?
- Are you enjoying this role-play or do you long for it to be over?

We filled them in together. She was scathing about her questions. She said that she was perfectly comfortable with the role-playing – as long as I was – but she didn’t really see me as a woman. She said I was doing a brilliant job as her maid. She didn’t need to give me orders as I was managing the household without her needing to.

Her feelings toward me were unchanged, except that she was impressed by my whole-hearted commitment to the study. She was happy to carry on for as long as I wanted to, because she saw how it was relieving my stress levels.

Questionnaire for the Maid

- Do you feel like a woman at all, or just a man in drag?
- Which of the following describes your feelings about wearing women’s clothes?
 - I absolutely hate this and am desperate to return to men’s clothes.
 - I don’t like it much, but I can put up with it till the end of the experiment.
 - I’m neutral. They’re just clothes. No biggie.
 - I actually quite like it. It’s fun and I think I look OK.
 - I’m having a wonderful time, and I shall definitely continue cross-dressing when this is all over.
- How do you feel about being a *working-class* woman now – a maid, a cleaner?
- Do you think your mistress is treating you well?
- Which of the following describes your feelings about your mistress?
 - She seems to take a special delight in being horrible to me. She treats me like dirt.
 - I’m a little surprised at how bossy she is to me. It makes me uncomfortable.
 - It’s fine. She’s playing the role very well and is reasonable in her demands.
 - I’m doing the household chores as the maid, but she’s not really trying to act as an employer or mistress much.
 - I don’t think she really gets it. She’s still doing a lot of the housework she always did. Our relationship hasn’t changed except that I’m in a maid’s uniform.

I had to think about my answers more carefully. I didn’t pretend to be disliking the experience – although there were some aspects of it I found very unpleasant. In particular, role-playing the maid with Bill was really demeaning. But I couldn’t bring myself to say I was having a

wonderful time and would continue cross-dressing afterwards. Yes, Jackie claimed *now* to be turned on by seeing me in women's clothes (especially the underwear), but I couldn't imagine her tolerating it as a way of life. I would surely lose all her respect.

So I put down *'I actually quite like it. It's fun and I think I look OK'* and admitted that *'I do feel like a woman'*, at least some of the time.

I was also honest and admitted that living as a poor working-class cleaner was surprisingly enjoyable, even exciting, although I suggested that it was probably just the novelty factor. I mentioned that I very much enjoyed the company of my fellow maids. I also said that *'My mistress is playing her role well and is reasonable in her demands'*.

I think some of my answers surprised Jackie a little.

Week 2 - Saturday

"Okay, so you're Nancy all day today and tomorrow, but you're not my maid," said Jackie in bed on Saturday morning. "You're my girlfriend. Or how about my sister? I know! You can be my sister-in-law, my husband's older sister."

"I think we'd better stick with just your friend," I said. I didn't want to squash her enthusiasm, but we needed to be careful. "If we say anything else, we could get caught out if we bumped into anyone who knows you and Dan."

"Fair enough. There's no reason why I shouldn't be friends with my maid, I suppose. I'm a very modern employer." She jumped out of bed. "Come on, it's after nine. The shops await."

* * *

It was wonderful to be spending time with my wife, even if I wasn't her husband today. She drove us to the shopping centre in her Merc. At least its little boot wouldn't have room for lots of parcels, so it should be possible to restrict her spending. I wouldn't mind if she bought herself some nice things, but I had the impression she wanted to fill out Nancy's wardrobe. That would just be silly.

I wore one of my casual dresses and my outdoor coat with my headscarf. Jackie insisted I wear my three-inch heels. She was determined to buy me a posh dress, and I would need to see what it looked like with my best shoes. She reluctantly agreed to get any more dresses second-hand from the nearest charity shop.

"Okay, one £200 dress and two £10 ones," she said.

"And that's all," I insisted. "Everything of Nancy's will be going back to the charity shop in a couple of weeks anyway."

"We'll see," she said.

I was about to comment on that when she dragged me into an expensive-looking boutique. We browsed the racks for the next half an hour with her frequently stopping and holding a dress up against me. It was a bizarre but not unpleasant experience.

She eventually found some we both liked and I had to go into the changing rooms to try them on. After my solo outing a week ago, I was less embarrassed about being surrounded by semi-naked women, and I felt the same about stripping down to my bra, panties and tights myself.

Needless to say, the experience was repeated in several shops during the morning. I found it exhausting, but Jackie joined me to try on a few dresses herself which made it all great fun – twirling and posing for each other.

This was a bit of a surprise as when I was Dan there was virtually nothing I hated more than trying on clothes. Apparently it really *is* different for a woman.

In the end Jackie persuaded me to get *two* full price dresses: a knee-length ‘little black dress’ with lace covering the neck and shoulders; and a light blue, floral pattern summer dress with short sleeves. I thought the latter was too short for a woman of my age, and I was a little worried about my muscly upper arms.

“Nonsense, it looks great on you!” Jackie just scoffed.

“I look like mutton dressed as lamb.”

“Well you can just wear it with me then, around the house and garden. But you need some sexy lingerie to go with your new dresses. Come on!”

“I can’t try on lingerie in a ladies’ changing room!”

“Don’t worry about it. I know your sizes.”

I’d been in Victoria’s Secret before, shopping for some well-received presents for my wife, but I’d never been there when *I* was the customer. I couldn’t stop blushing. The sales staff were most amused.

“I’m really looking forward to seeing you in these, sweetie,” she said.

“Your wish is my command, Madam,” I said, again.

“Damn right!” she said, triumphantly.

But I realised I was looking forward to it as well!

* * *

The main mission for the day accomplished, we looked for a place for lunch and settled on a good restaurant with waitress service. I noticed we got a few curious looks, but Jackie assured me it wasn’t because anyone suspected I was a man. It was because we looked unlikely companions. I took that to mean she was young, beautiful, and elegant, while I was older, fat and shabby. She confirmed, apologetically, that that *was* what she meant.

Of course that was the general idea behind my disguise – the McLaughlin woman had been spot-on – but I didn't have to *like* it. So be it, I was going to have steak and kidney pie and chips – and to hell with Nancy's diet. My waist-cincher didn't seem so tight anymore.

"You know I said in my questionnaire that I didn't see you as a woman?" she said, while we were waiting for our food to arrive. I nodded. "Well, in retrospect, I suppose that isn't true." She lowered her voice. "It's almost impossible *not* to see you as a woman – the way you look and act."

"And does that bother you? Should I be worried?"

"Oh no, babe!" she rushed to reassure me. "I'm just saying you've done a fantastic job at creating Nancy, but I know it's you, my lover and soulmate, underneath. You're both Dan and Nancy – *Dancy!*" She grinned.

"Well, as long as you don't mind..."

"Mind?" she exclaimed. "Quite the opposite! You're sexy as Dan, but if anything, you're even sexier as Nancy!"

The waitress arrived with our food. I hoped she hadn't overheard any of *that* conversation.

After lunch I insisted we go to a couple of charity shops where I got three frumpy size 16 dresses for £10. They would be fine for going out with the girls, except of course that I would only be Nancy for two more weeks, so there would be limited opportunities for that.

Week 3 - Sunday

We planned to spend the rest of the weekend as we normally did, except that I was Nancy throughout in my new second-hand dresses. We went for a walk on Sunday morning. We gave ourselves a pass on any housework as Nancy and Maggie had done such a good job during the week. We also didn't need to think about any household projects or other D-I-Y, as we weren't in our own home.

We had sealed our completed questionnaires in separate envelopes and left them on the hall table for Bill. He arrived at noon, as promised. I went upstairs when we heard his car and hid in the maid's bedroom with my *Cosmo* (which I had begun to realise was entirely fantasy for a woman of my modest means).

Jackie opened the front door and invited him in. I left the bedroom door open so I could hear their voices in the hall.

"Here are the questionnaires, Bill," Jackie said. "Can you stay for a cup of tea?"

"That would be nice, thanks. So where's Dan? Or is it still Nancy today?"

"Well *obviously* it's Nancy. She can't be Dan again until those Transformations people undo everything they did. She said something about going out with her friends today."

“What friends?”

But at that point the kitchen door closed behind them and I didn't hear Jackie's explanation.

About five minutes later I heard them going from the kitchen into the sitting room.

“But everything is all right between you two, isn't it?” I heard Bill saying in the hall. “I wouldn't want to think that...”

“Nancy is my *maid*, Bill,” Jackie interrupted. “That's what you wanted, isn't it? She does her job very well, so *of course* everything's all right between us.”

“But I meant...”

And the sitting room door closed behind them.

It was another half an hour before they emerged again.

“I'm just really surprised, that's all; that he's... I mean, *she's* going to work as a maid in a hotel,” Bill was saying.

“Well, her friend, Maggie, suggested it, and I suppose Dan thought it would be the kind of thing Nancy would do. You – *we* – left her so short of money, she would obviously take any opportunity to make a little extra. And she's such a *good* maid that she can easily spare three mornings a week and still keep this place in tip-top condition.”

“But still, cleaning hotel rooms...”

“We thought it would be a good fit with everything else. Nancy will get even more experience of domestic service, and being ordered around, and being treated like a skivvy. If that doesn't bring out the submissive in her, nothing will. I thought you'd be pleased.”

“Oh, yes, I am, of course. It's just that...” Bill had the grace to sound a little uneasy. “I'm surprised he feels comfortable going out, meeting people, interacting... as Nancy. Isn't he afraid he'll be caught? It could be really embarrassing for him. He could lose his job. I mean, his *real* job.”

I heard Jackie open the front door.

“No, I don't think *she's* worried about that at all. You've seen Nancy; she's completely convincing. No one she's met so far has shown any suspicions at all.”

“Well, all right, but remember *I* only intended him to stay inside the house. Any consequences of taking Nancy out into the world are on him.”

He left and Jackie closed the door behind him. When I heard his car driving off, I came down.

“That was quite funny,” Jackie said. “I think he's afraid we might be going too far. It sounds like he didn't know the Transformations people would send you out into the world for your maid training.”

“Well I hope he *is* feeling a little guilty,” I said. “I’m putting myself through a lot for him.”

“Rubbish!” she snorted. “You’re having the time of your life. I certainly am! Now, I know it’s your day off, but there’s a couple of little things I want you to attend to in the bedroom.”

I grudgingly allowed her to drag me upstairs...

* * *

Jackie wanted us to look our best for going out to a restaurant and a movie on Sunday night. She insisted on acting as *my lady’s* maid when we were getting ready. I put on my new sexy underwear with the inevitable waist cincher.

Jackie did my hair and lent me some pearls. When she was finished I couldn’t believe what I saw in the mirror. Nancy might have passed for thirty-five!

I wore my new LBD for our Girls’ Night Out. I can’t remember much about the film as we were smooching at the back, which got us some disapproving looks but at least deterred any potential male admirers.

* * *

Later in the bedroom I was putting my curlers in and Jackie was lying on the bed, supervising.

“By the way,” she began, “earlier on, while you were upstairs this afternoon, I asked Bill about the others on the project.”

“What others?”

“Exactly! He’s never mentioned any other volunteers, but he definitely gave me the impression – back in May – that we wouldn’t be the only couple testing out the theory.”

“No, you’re right, I remember that. But the whole thing’s supposed to be anonymous, isn’t it?”

“That’s what *he* said, but I wasn’t asking him to name names, just tell us whether any of the other couples were developing dominant or submissive behaviours as a result of the role-playing. In other words, were we turning out to be the exception or the rule?”

“Fair enough; it’s a reasonable question. After all we’ve put a lot of skin in the game. What did he say?”

“Nothing. He got very defensive; started mumbling about it being too early to say. He said ‘he’s ethically forbidden to share any of the findings until the experiment has concluded’.”

“Sounds like rubbish to me. We’re his friends! He knows we wouldn’t tell anyone. Hell, we *couldn’t* without it getting out what I’ve been doing with my sabbatical. It would be too embarrassing.”

Jackie agreed Bill was being unnecessarily cagey. Then she asked a weird question, quite out of the blue.

“How would you feel if I made you wear a chastity belt?”

“*What?* How do you *think* I would feel? Why on earth would you want to do that?”

“I don’t. Bill suggested it. He’s seen from our diaries that I’m not becoming a *domme*, and you’re not feeling submissive. I don’t think I’ve ever even *heard* of a male chastity belt. Apparently it would put your... thing... under lock and key and entirely under my control. It sounds really nasty.”

“Agreed, but I’ll tell you how I would feel,” I said, with a lump in my throat. “I’d feel I couldn’t trust you anymore.”

“Dan!”

“Well, from what I understand, the *domme*-sub relationship has to be founded on *trust*. The sub trusts that his *domme* may humiliate him, even beat him, but would never take it further than they were *both* willing to go. At the moment I *trust* that you would never want to do any of that, or subject me to that kind of humiliation. If you tried to do it, that trust would disappear.”

“Yes, that makes sense – and I would *never* do it, any more than I would ever try to hurt you physically.”

“Or I you.”

“Boy, this stupid role-play is just about avoiding one trap after another, isn’t it?” she said. “I’m beginning to wonder about Bill. Some of the things he wants us to do...”

“I know. I was afraid my dressing-up would ruin our relationship, but...” Jackie gave a little cry and threw her arms around me. I laughed. “...but that doesn’t seem to be happening. I don’t think things will ever be the same between me and Bill though. I may have lost my oldest friend.”

Week 3 - Monday

Nancy the maid was back and would be out in the world today, working for a new employer. I was surprised how much I was looking forward to it.

Jackie dropped me off near the front of the hotel just before half-past eight. I rushed as quickly as my increasing confidence in high heels would allow down a side street to the staff entrance. I was wearing my best second-hand dress, my only outdoor coat, and my inevitable headscarf. Maggie had said the hotel would provide my uniform. All I had to bring were some flat shoes.

I would be mixing with lots of new people – hotel guests, management, and other maids – so I knew I had to get Nancy’s story straight. I’d started thinking about her life and after a week

of being her I thought I knew who she was now. She was from a working-class family. She left school at fifteen and worked in a shop. She hated that and got married as soon as she could. A plumber, or maybe a car mechanic? Anyway, they were too young. Children didn't come and the marriage didn't last. They split up – no one's fault; they just had nothing in common anymore. She found a decent job training to be a secretary but got stressed out. Now with no qualifications, maid or cleaning lady was about all that was left for her.

But I'd better start thinking of *her* as *me*...

So *my* life experience has knocked all the self-confidence out of *me*. I'm shy and I don't have much to say for myself. All that should be consistent with what Maggie and the others have seen of me in the past week and should explain my reticence in company. Quite a contrast from the assertive and intimidating Dan Richards! I, Nancy, would be rather frightened of Dan, and I don't think I'd like him very much – not that I was ever likely to meet him.

Okay, that was probably enough. I could end up with a split personality that way. No need to try any more to put myself in Nancy's shoes when I was already wearing them, and her underwear, and her dress...

The hotel security man quickly found *Nancy Potts* on his list, muttering something about how it made a nice change to be looking for a good old-fashioned English name. He delegated his assistant to show me the way to the office of the Housekeeping Manager, Mrs Hartley.

Remembering my phony autobiography and what I had decided would be Nancy's timid character, I kept my head down and answered all her questions in a soft voice, barely above a whisper. Apparently satisfied that I wasn't likely to cause her any problems, she was brisk and efficient but friendly enough. She gave me a form to fill out and bring back next time. A quick glance showed that it needed contact, next of kin, and bank account details.

She took a keycard on a lanyard from her desk drawer. She handed it to me, indicating I should put it round my neck and tuck it inside the collar of my uniform dress. She warned me not to lose it on pain of instant dismissal, as it was a master key and it opened every guest room in the hotel as well as all the supply cupboards.

Then she took me down to the ladies' locker room in the basement. Several women were there in various stages of undress. They were mostly young – well younger than Nancy – and judging by the mix of accents and languages, mostly immigrants. They looked up when Mrs Hartley and I came in. A couple of them smiled; most took no interest in me.

Maggie was there, changing into her uniform. She waved, and Mrs Hartley gratefully handed me over to her and left. It was the easiest job interview I'd ever had.

"The spare uniforms and aprons are in that cupboard over there, dear," Maggie said, pointing at the far wall. They should all be clean, and one of them should fit you. At the end of your shift, just drop everything in the hamper."

I changed my outdoor shoes for my white sneakers and stripped down to my slip and tights, putting my dress, coat, scarf, outdoor shoes and handbag in a vacant locker. I found a size 16

uniform and an apron in the cupboard. The dress fitted well enough. I closed the locker door and popped the key in my apron pocket.

It was just before nine o'clock. Ready for the day, I turned to Maggie for instructions.

"We've been assigned to do the second floor today, she said. "We need to collect a cart each. They're usually left by the service lifts. We have to return them there at the end of the shift because there's no space upstairs."

She led the way. There were a dozen maid's carts lined up against the wall. We collected one each. They were about half full of clean towels, packets of soap, shampoo, body lotions, conditioner and so on. We wheeled our carts over to the lift. I was surprised how heavy mine was, even not fully loaded.

There were a couple of girls ahead of us. We waited our turn for the lift, then Maggie pressed the call button.

"We get everything else we need, like clean bed linen, from the supply cupboard up on our floor," Maggie said, while we waited for the lift. "There are twenty-eight rooms on each floor, except for the top where the penthouse suites are, but we won't be sent up there. They're only for Mrs Hartley's favourites."

The lift came and we got in. The floor buttons were over on my side, so I pressed the button for the second floor.

"I have our list here," Maggie said. "It tells us whether a room is occupied or not, and whether a guest is leaving today. Check-out time is eleven a.m., so we would usually wait till after that to do those rooms. You might see a room with a green '*Please make up my room*' card on the door handle. We have to do those first, because the guest may be down at breakfast and plans to spend the morning in the room – working maybe. We get a lot of business travellers here."

The lift arrived at the second floor. We pushed our carts out and Maggie led the way to the supply cupboard. I looked along the nondescript hotel corridor. It was busy with people making their way to or from the guests' lifts, some trailing suitcases. A few red and green cards were visible. Maggie fished out her key card from her bosom and opened the cupboard door.

"There isn't much room in here, so I'll pick the stuff out and hand it to you to put on the carts. We'll swap on Wednesday."

With her experience she was able to size up what was missing from each cart with a glance, so the process didn't take long. At first she had to point out where I should put everything on the cart, but I soon got the hang of it. We moved our now even heavier carts towards the first door with a green card on it.

"Obviously we have to wait if a room has a red '*Please do not disturb*' card on the handle," Maggie said as we arrived at the room.

“Sometimes the ‘Do not disturb’ card stays on the door all through our shift, so we get away without cleaning that room! Unfortunately sometimes it doesn’t get removed until nearly one o’clock, so one of us will be late going off shift, but of course we don’t get overtime. Why don’t you open the door? Just touch the card to the white panel there. The little light should turn green, then you push the handle down and the door should open.”

Nancy had probably never stayed in a modern hotel like this, but Dan had, so I had no trouble following Maggie’s instructions.

“Okay, we’ll do the first couple of rooms together, so I can show you everything you have to do and the most efficient order to do it in. Then you can fly solo!”

She quickly scanned her list.

“The guest in this room is staying another night, so we don’t have to change the bed. By the way, I see that four rooms are unoccupied, and they should have been cleaned and prepared by Housekeeping yesterday. So we have four hours to do twenty-four rooms. Shouldn’t be too hard, but we can’t hang about.”

She pushed her cart into the room. I made to follow but she stopped me.

“We only need one cart in the room,” she said. “You can leave yours outside. Now it’s important that the doors stay open whenever we’re working inside, but they’re on springs and will close if left to themselves, so I always leave my cart to prop the door open.”

I pushed past her cart and we began. We opened the curtains in the bedroom and lowered the blinds. Then we emptied the waste baskets in the bedroom and the bathroom into a large garbage sack hanging on the end of the cart. The guest had left used bottles of shampoo and body wash in the bath. We binned an empty bottle and screwed the top of a half-empty one back on properly and put it back in its place on the washstand. Then we wiped down the bath, toilet, and washbasin, leaving the toilet seat down. We rearranged the towels that hadn’t been used and replaced those that had. We checked the rest of the toiletries and replenished them where necessary.

There were two towels on the floor, both wet. Maggie used them to mop up water from the floor. Then she sent me to drop the wet towels into a bucket on the cart and fetch two clean replacements. She showed me how to arrange the clean towels on the rack.

“Finally, don’t forget this,” she smiled, and folded over the ends of the toilet roll into a little ‘V’. “No idea why we have to do that,” she said, “but every hotel does!”

We turned our attention to the bed.

“When the guest is staying another night, we have to do a quick inspection of the sheets, brush any little hairs or biscuit crumbs onto the floor. We have to change them if there are any... you know, *stains*,” she winced. “But if they’re okay, we just pull them tight and tuck them in again. That’s much easier with two.”

Next we tidied up the various papers and documents that the guest had strewn around on the desk and coffee table. He – a glance at the wardrobe confirmed it *was* a he, even if the lack of feminine accessories in the bathroom hadn't already done so – had left a laptop plugged in on the desk, and there were other charging devices plugged in beside it.

"Never touch anything electronic the guest may have left," Maggie said. "People can be very touchy about that."

We were now ready to do a little light dusting and finished by vacuuming throughout.

"Eleven minutes," she said, checking her watch. "Not bad, considering I had to show you what to do. We'll get faster."

* * *

In the end we did three rooms together, getting quicker each time, then we split up. I called Maggie after I had finished my first three rooms by myself and she came and inspected my work. She made minor adjustments to my arrangement of the towels and the toiletries, and sharpened up my bed-making, but then declared I could carry on by myself.

As we moved around the floor, between rooms and to and from the supply cupboard, we passed many guests. Maggie had instructed me always to stop, smile and bob (not a full curtsy!) and to say '*Good morning, Sir or Madam*'. This was important – to give the right impression to paying customers, and because one might leave a tip!

At about half-past eleven, she declared we were sufficiently far along that we could take a short break, so we left our carts outside the supply cupboard and took the service lift down to the basement. There was a break room for the housekeeping staff next to the women's lockers, with snacks in a vending machine and free percolator coffee. The room was about half full of chattering women in the same maid uniforms as us, most of them sitting at Formica tables. A couple had removed their shoes and were rubbing their feet. I knew how they felt and longed to do the same.

Maggie poured coffee for us both and fetched a pint of milk from the fridge next to the vending machine. She led me over to a table for six where two young girls were already sitting. Maggie introduced us.

"This is Hanna and Zofia," she said. They smiled a welcome. "Ladies, this is Nancy. Today is her first day." She turned to me. "We all started on the same day – nearly two years ago now."

"Ach, don't remind me," said Hanna in an Eastern European accent. "I never thought I'd still be here after that long."

The others laughed.

"Don't you like it here?" I asked. "It doesn't seem too bad to me."

“Oh, it’s not so bad really,” said Zofia, smiling. “We’re in the warm and dry. It’s not really hard work and the pay is OK.”

“It’s just – what do you call it in English? – *drudgery*?” said Hanna. The others smiled and nodded. “Yes, is good word, *drudgery*. It sounds like what it is.”

“Onomatopoeia,” I muttered, absently. I could feel Maggie looking at me curiously.

“Huh?”

“Yes,” I agreed, “it’s a good word for what it is. *Drudgery*.”

But I realised I *liked* this ‘*drudgery*’. Cleaning is *satisfying*. Bringing order to chaos. *What is happening to me?*

We could only spare time for a fifteen-minute break but I enjoyed the company of the hotel maids, just as I had the Home Counties Housekeeping cleaning ladies. When needed in the conversation I was able to call on Nancy’s back story, as I had imagined it. With that in mind I had more in common with my fellow maids now than I had with anyone at Atkinson Stern.

We finished the remaining rooms comfortably within the time allowed for a four-hour shift. We had to stay in the break room until one o’clock in case any additional housekeeping tasks came up, or any of our colleagues had run into problems on other floors. Maggie explained that some of the other maids weren’t as quick as she was, and she was often asked to do a couple more rooms before leaving. She thought we should be paid by the room as that would incentivise us to be quick and efficient. I pointed out that it might also encourage the less conscientious girls to be careless and do a shoddy job. She sighed and nodded.

There was no more for us to do today so we all just sat around drinking coffee and chatting till one o’clock came round. I learned a lot I didn’t really need to know about Maria’s forthcoming operation and Olga’s mother’s haemorrhoids, but we all had a jolly time, and I think I was accepted as one of them.

Also, as it was my first day, Mrs Hartley insisted on inspecting the rooms I had done before allowing me to go, but she soon returned and announced herself satisfied. She confirmed that I would be welcome at least for the Wednesday and Friday morning shifts that week. After that she would let me know. She reminded me to complete my personal details form and return it on Wednesday if I wanted to be paid promptly.

So Maggie and I parted company again; she to the Sheldrakes and me back to our rented house. I took the bus back home. I’ve rarely used buses since I left university, but it felt perfectly comfortable for Nancy. I read my *Cosmopolitan*, fascinated by the stories of talentless celebs, and making mental notes of make-up tips I would have to try.

On the way home from the bus stop I picked up some bread and milk from our corner store. When I got back I had a quick sandwich and went around the house looking for things to do. I put a small laundry load in, mostly my bras, panties, slippers and uniforms. I inspected Madam’s clothes to see if anything needed ironing; and I vacuumed the upstairs rooms again, though they didn’t really need it. Then I started thinking about dinner.

When Jackie came home she was eager to hear about my day. So over dinner I told her everything, trying to make it sound interesting when obviously it really wasn't. What could a high-flying Astrophysicist possibly find exciting about a hotel maid's job? But she listened spellbound. She was fascinated by my stories of maids and hotel housekeeping, but whether her fascination was with the stories themselves or with the fact that her husband was so happy about becoming one of that community, I couldn't tell.

"It's not what you had to do," she said, when I asked why she was so rivetted by my mundane experiences. "It's that it's *you* who were doing it. You're obviously loving all of this. You're happy again. I haven't seen you this contented since you got your partnership – and even that only brought *satisfaction*, not – I don't know – *joy*. And I've hardly ever seen you smile when talking about your work since then. Sorry, I'm not putting this very well."

"No, no, I think you're spot on. You've given me a lot to think about. I have no worries as Nancy the maid. Life is... carefree. I don't know what part of being her is working the magic – maybe it's a combination of things – but I can almost feel my stress levels dropping."

Until I thought about having to back to Atkinson Stern in October, then they rocketed back up again, but I decided to keep that to myself for the moment.

I stayed in full maid mode till after I finished clearing up. Then I changed into my nightie and dressing gown and we sat down with a second glass of wine each.

Jackie obviously found my story of life as a hotel maid sexually overwhelming. I lay back in bed that night; curlers in, nightie up around my boobs, prosthetic off; and enjoyed a night of unadulterated passion.

Week 3 – Tuesday

Our morning routine was fully established now. I did my duties as cook and lady's maid and saw my beautiful and smartly-dressed mistress off to work. She thanked me warmly, as always, and said that she loved being so well looked after but insisted that she would make it up to Dan when he returned. As always, I insisted there was no need.

After Jackie had left for work I changed out of my maid uniform into one of my casual dresses because that morning at eleven I had to go through something I hadn't been looking forward to – a return to Transformations for a 'maintenance' appointment. It was necessary though, as stubble was starting to appear all over me. I had kept the worst at bay by shaving my face and legs, but I grudgingly admitted that another waxing would soon be inevitable.

Bill's project paid for a car to take me to the Manor House at 10.30. When I got there I checked in with Angela, the receptionist. I was expecting some kind of snide remarks from her. After all what does a pretty young girl think of a man in his early thirties who voluntarily allows himself to be turned into a fat, middle-aged cleaning woman? But she was totally professional.

"Ah, good morning, Mrs Potts," she said, with a warm smile and not the slightest hint of a smirk. "You're booked in with Vera first; then a session with Sharon, to see if you need

anything doing to your hair, though it looks lovely to me.” She smiled again. “After that Mrs McLaughlin has invited you to have lunch with her. Will that be all right?”

I confirmed that it would be fine.

“Good. Let me just give Vera a buzz.”

The brawny Vera came to collect me a couple of minutes later and led me back to her torture chamber. It had been sixteen days since I saw her last and I hadn’t missed her a bit.

“Morning, Nancy. It should be much easier for you this time. Strip off, please.”

I obliged. I noticed she hadn’t offered me any booze to deaden the pain this time. I hoped that was a good sign.

“You can keep your knickers and prosthesis on for the moment, but you need to take your bra off.”

I unhooked my bra expertly like I had been doing it all my life. My heavy counterfeit breasts swung down, pulling on my back and shoulder muscles and stretching the skin on my chest. Two weeks ago I would have been deeply embarrassed to be topless in front of a relative stranger wearing only a pair of knickers, but now it didn’t bother me at all. We were ‘all girls here’.

“Lie down,” she said, indicating the familiar operating table bed, “on your back.”

She had picked up a plastic bottle and was dabbing the fluid it contained onto cotton wool. It smelt medicinal, like methylated spirit. She started rubbing gently around the edges of my breast forms.

“This is a solvent for the surgical adhesive,” she explained. “I need to push it under the edges of your forms and then gradually peel them off.”

It took her about ten minutes to get both forms off; gently tugging; wiping solvent onto the exposed surfaces of my chest and the form; lifting; then repeating. I wondered why she didn’t give them a good yank, like you do with an Elastoplast, but I was glad she took her time. I remembered Mrs McLaughlin saying something about my flesh tearing before the glue would give.

When she’d finished she reached for another bottle and a soft cloth.

“This is just a mild detergent, like baby shampoo,” she said.

First she used it on my breast forms to give them a thorough cleaning.

“Now I’m just going to wipe away any remaining glue, solvent, dead skin, and so on from your chest. Then we can check that you haven’t got a rash or anything.”

Compared with my previous encounters with Vera, this was a pleasant experience.

“No problems there,” she said eventually. “Okay, now I need you to take off your knickers and prosthesis. You can slip these paper panties on, if you want.”

Oh, I *wanted*. There was only one woman I felt comfortable being completely naked with, and Vera wasn't her. I noticed that the knickers were much smaller than those I usually wore with the prosthesis. She took it from me and went over to a basin in the corner of the room. She used the detergent and a water hose to give it a good cleaning. Then she hung it up over the sink.

“That should be dry by the time you're ready to put it on again.”

Then there followed a repeat of the earlier waxing experience. It was still horrible but she was right – it wasn't anything like as bad as before. It was more like lots of little pin pricks rather than ghastly tearing wounds. While I was on my tummy she also gently lowered my panties and used the baby shampoo on my buttocks. Later when she had turned me over she repeated the exercise round my genitals. As before, she finished with a massage with soothing lotion which helped enormously. Then she left me to recover and went to fetch Sharon, the hairdresser.

“Not bad,” Sharon said when she saw the professional quality tint and perm Jackie had given me. “That must have cost a pretty penny. I thought you were working as a maid?” I mumbled something about my employer doing it. “Well, I don't think you need me to do anything for you for now, do you?”

I agreed and she left. Vera pronounced my forms and prosthesis to be dry and helped me put them back on again.

“I'll give you a bottle of the solvent,” she said, “then you won't need to come back here so often, OK?”

That was fine by me. I had decidedly mixed memories of Transformations. I only had another week and a half as Nancy anyway. But then I realised: if Mrs McLaughlin thought I was actually transitioning, presumably Vera and the others thought so too.

I got dressed again. It was a relief to put my bra back on to provide support for my heavy breasts, but I was comfortable enough in all of Nancy's clothes now, even the waist cincher – quite a contrast for how I felt a fortnight ago. I could even zip up my dress without help. I checked my make-up and reapplied my lipstick.

I picked up my coat and handbag. It was now after twelve. I thanked Vera for her tender loving care and made my way along to Mrs McLaughlin's office.

We had quite a pleasant lunch in the canteen. She obviously thought I was 'the finished product' and didn't need any further instruction from her.

“One thing I don't understand, Nancy,” she said, as we sat down with our meals. “You're obviously educated. I'd say you were a middle-class professional person. So why do you want to be a cleaning lady when you transition? Why not just get your qualifications and CV transferred to your new identity?”

“It’s... complicated,” I began.

I still couldn’t tell her I *wasn’t* transitioning. It *was* complicated, and much too hard to explain.

“From which I have to assume you’re hiding,” she interrupted. “You’re on the run from something or someone. Well I won’t enquire further. It’s none of my business, and if you’ve been involved with anything criminal, I’d much rather *not* know.”

“No, it’s nothing like that,” I said. “It’s just that I have to make a complete change from my former life. I’m much happier as I am now.”

And it was true, I realised. But what do I do about it?

* * *

Back at home that afternoon I put on a clean uniform and got back to the laundry, the vacuuming, and the cooking. I put the radio on and hummed along with the afternoon Easy Listening hour.

While I was doing the ironing, Abba’s *Money Money Money* came on and I realised with a start that I hadn’t read a newspaper Finance column or consulted a financial news website for more than two weeks. For a moment I panicked. I would be getting out of touch! I needed to know what was going on in the financial world!

I calmed myself down. This was exactly the sort of thing that got me stressed out in the first place. My assistants at Atkinson Stern would be keeping a keen eye on my clients’ affairs and filing away everything I would need to know for when I returned. Maybe I would ask Jackie to check my Inbox again.

Then I realised I didn’t care. Nancy had no interest in the financial markets. She had no clients and no money of her own. As her, my life was settling into a comfortable routine. Unlike poor Hanna, work still didn’t feel like ‘drudgery’, and I was beginning to wonder when – or even *if* – the novelty would wear off. I was actually looking forward very much to my second day at the Travellers’ Rest and seeing the girls again.

I remembered that I hadn’t filled the Personal Details form in yet. When I finished the ironing, I rummaged in my handbag for it. I filled in all Nancy’s details from the fictitious biography Bill had given me. Apparently my middle name was Rosemary. I had no next of kin but I put Jackie down as my emergency contact with the relationship, *Employer*.

I left the National Insurance number blank. Nancy was a freelance contractor to the hotel anyway and would be responsible for her own taxes – not that she was likely to earn enough to pay any – but the employer wouldn’t need to worry about ‘Pay As You Earn’ (PAYE).

Most important would be my – Nancy’s – bank account details, as my meagre wages would be paid directly into my account. And I should check that what I was earning as Madam’s maid was being paid. Would Bill be doing that or Jackie? She hadn’t mentioned it. It was important to me that Nancy earned her money and was paid for her work...

I was thinking like a poor person – as I *should* be. For the moment at least, *I was Nancy*, and *I was poor*. I didn't have access to Dan's fortune. I could see now how being poor might make you submissive. Nancy couldn't afford to offend her employers. She would be in deep trouble if she were sacked. It was a scary but strangely liberating thought.

* * *

That evening as we were getting ready for bed, Jackie reminded me that there was a faculty meeting that Friday. She would almost certainly be late home as they usually went out for drinks afterwards, and I shouldn't worry about dinner. At that point I remembered that Friday was also the day of the Home Counties Housekeeping Maids' Night Out. I felt I had to ask my mistress if I could go.

"Of course, you can," she laughed. "You may be role-playing my maid but you're not my prisoner! I hope you have a good time with your new friends. You can wear your new dress – you know, the 'mutton dressed as lamb' one. You'll be the Belle of the Ball."

"I don't know about that..."

"Actually, I'm a little jealous. I'll be stuck with those pompous asses at the Department. I've nothing in common with any of them. I'd love to meet the other maids."

I told her where we were going and what time, and we worked out that I probably wouldn't be back till after ten. I was down to my underwear now, which always seemed to get Jackie excited. I turned my back to her modestly and wriggled out of my bra.

"I just love that big round bum of yours, babe!" she said. I blushed scarlet. "All that lovely white flesh bulging out of your panties! You know, I'm really going to miss Nancy when this is over," she said. "Maybe she could pop by every now and then...?"

"To clean and cook and do your laundry, you mean?"

"Yes, that as well," she giggled.

Week 3 – Wednesday

Wednesday was a repeat of Monday, except that Maggie sent me into the supply cupboard to replenish the carts. I had to do as she had done on Monday; that is, identify what we were short of, estimate what we needed, and find the new stock in the dark and stuffy cupboard.

I was also allowed to do my share of the rooms on my own. It was a full house today and we had to do all twenty-eight rooms. We took a coffee break at eleven o'clock and enjoyed a good gossip with Hanna and Zofia and some other girls I hadn't met before. Today the topic was 'most ghastly things found when cleaning a room' – for the benefit of the new girl, me. Somehow Maggie and I still finished all our allotted rooms early.

I gave Mrs Hartley my personal details form. She scanned it quickly and thanked me. She again carried out a quick inspection of the rooms I had done and confirmed that she would like me to be back for the Friday morning shift. She asked me a few questions about my

personal life, but when I told her I was a live-in maid with limited availability, she seemed to lose interest. I assumed she had been thinking of offering me additional shifts. I took that as a good sign; she must be pleased with my work.

There wasn't much to do back home that afternoon, so I did a little light dusting and vacuuming downstairs and then had a lie down. I started dinner at about five o'clock and looked forward to a quiet evening with Jackie.

She was a little late as her boss had her preparing lots of figures for the faculty meeting. Since this wasn't what she became an academic for, she wasn't in the best of moods.

"I need to get back to the lab, and I'm overdue for a trip to the observatory," she said. "I need to use my allocated telescope time or I'll lose it."

"Can I help with some of your figures, Madam?" I offered. "You know I'm pretty nifty with spreadsheets, charts and tables."

"Well, *Dan* is," she grinned. "I'm not sure I want my ignorant maid messing up all my data before an important meeting."

"Very funny, Madam," I said. "Well, if you don't want my help..."

"Actually I really do." She was serious for a moment. "I lost an hour or so this afternoon because of that bloody American."

"What American?"

"Oh I thought I told you? No, maybe not; you were away learning to be Nancy when he arrived. His name's Fulbrooke. He's a visiting professor, loosely attached to Astrophysics. Bill knows him; in fact, he introduced us. He seems somehow to have got wind that my husband is currently away on a sabbatical. I don't know how he found out, because I didn't tell anyone. Bill wouldn't have told him, would he?"

"He promised to keep our involvement in his project a secret, but everyone at Atkinson Stern knows Dan is on sabbatical."

"Hmm... Anyway he keeps asking me out; first for coffee, then lunch, then this afternoon he invited me to dinner."

"And...?" I said, concerned that there might be more to this. My concerns resurfaced that Jackie might be missing a 'real man' now that I was just her maid and sometime girlfriend.

"And *nothing!* For God's sake, don't go getting paranoid on me! I refused even to have morning coffee with him, let alone the rest. But he just doesn't seem to take 'no' for an answer."

"Well let me know if it becomes a real problem. Dan can always come back for a visit."

"He can come back now, if you like, in his sexy nightie and curlers, and help me with my budget projections."

Week 3 – Thursday

With no shift at the hotel and the house clean and tidy throughout, I was struggling to find things to do today. I changed the bed linen – I was getting quite good at that now – and managed to scrape up one load of washing – the sheets and some of Jackie’s blouses.

I washed some more of her delicate underthings by hand, and found myself wondering what it would be like if I were a slimmer, richer woman and could wear pretty lingerie like this... As soon as I realised what I was thinking I snapped out of it and gave myself a stern talking-to.

I left the washing to dry and popped down to the corner shop. We only really needed milk, and maybe some bread and cheese, but it was good to get out of the house and stretch my legs. It amused me to think that I now had absolutely no qualms about going out dressed as Nancy the maid. It wasn’t just that I was confident in my disguise. It was like I was taking time off from being myself, and my new persona had so much less to worry about...

That made me think about Nancy’s personality. Success at Atkinson Stern required Dan to be ambitious, pushy, driven, competitive. I didn’t recognise those attributes in myself now, and I was glad, because I didn’t like them at all. No wonder Jackie had been worried that I was changing. But the Nancy I was becoming was placid, obliging, sweet-natured. Would that make me submissive after all? This was something to talk to my mistress about tonight.

I’d had enough of daytime television by now so I went on to the local library and took out some romance novels. I had no idea about the authors or the plots but they looked like the kind of thing a woman like Nancy might read.

When I got home I ironed what needed ironing and made myself some lunch. After that I put my feet up and picked up one of my romances. It was quite gripping!

“You lazy maid!” I said to myself, after an hour’s reading. “What would your mistress say if she saw you now?”

I put the dinner in at about 5.30 and hurried back to finish my book. Jackie got back at around six o’clock and laughed her head off when she saw what I was reading.

We had both accepted that we were only paying lip service to being mistress and maid now. I still called her ‘Madam’ and curtsied a lot, but out of habit rather than respect; and she called me Nancy, because she found it hard to think of me as her husband, Dan. But she insisted that she still thought of me as her soulmate, best friend and only sexual partner, even though Nancy was clearly of a different social class, what with her working as a cleaning lady outside the home as well as inside.

I decided to shelve any discussion about my new developing personality for the moment.

Week 3 – Friday

I had settled in comfortably as a hotel maid and was glad to spend time with Maggie, Hanna, Zofia and the other girls, with whom I now had so much in common. And why was that, I wondered, as I wiped, and scrubbed, and vacuumed? After all, in reality I was a white

Englishman and rich; they were women, immigrants and poor. Was I just a very good method actor submerging himself in his role? Or was I *really* a lowly cleaning lady at my core?

I had to be honest with myself; I didn't feel like I was pretending at all anymore. As long as I was living this life, I *really was* Mrs Nancy Potts, up to and including her gender. But would I revert to being Dan Richards when I shaved off my perm; removed my make-up and prostheses; and put on men's clothes again? Not that I was looking forward to doing that at all, but I suppose it had to be faced, if only to find out once and for all how I wanted to live the rest of my life.

Jackie and I had clearly smashed Bill's theory that the maid-mistress role-playing would lead to domme-sub behaviours, but I seem to have found out something quite different about myself.

At the end of the morning shift, Mrs Hartley called for me to come and see her. She handed me a payslip showing that my wages had been paid into my bank account. She also declared herself very pleased with my work and confirmed that she wanted me for the same shifts next week and regularly thereafter. I agreed happily, aware that I was making a commitment beyond the end of my three weeks as Nancy. But that was a problem for another day.

When I parted company with Maggie, she reminded me that she would see me again that evening, along with Doreen, Sally and the others, at eight o'clock at the Cottage Loaf. I hadn't forgotten. I was really looking forward to being with the girls again.

I went back home and did a little cleaning. There was no dinner to prepare as Jackie was going straight from work to the early evening faculty meeting. So I had plenty of time to get ready. I showered, then washed my hair and set it as Jackie had shown me, sitting under the dryer on a low setting for an hour. It looked great. I also painted my nails for the first time since Sharon had done them more than two weeks ago.

I put on my best lingerie, waist cincher and slip. Then I did my make-up. After much deliberation I eventually decided to bite the bullet and wear the floral minidress we'd bought the previous Saturday. As Dan I thought it looked brassy, even vulgar, but as Nancy I knew I would fit in well with the other maids, and I really didn't care what stuck-up snobs like Dan would think.

I did attract quite a lot of attention on the bus though. In fact I got my first wolf whistle. I blushed scarlet. I snapped my knees together tightly and placed my handbag primly in my lap.

When I got off the bus at the nearest stop to the Cottage Loaf, I saw Maggie, Sally and a couple of the others approaching from the other direction. I waved and joined them, tottering a little on my highest heels. Despite my growing confidence I was glad I wouldn't have to enter such a rowdy establishment alone.

Sally whistled when she saw my dress. "Wow, look at you, Posh!" she squealed.

As we approached the pub a small group were coming out. I thought I recognised a couple of them and it quickly came to me they were members of the Astrophysics Department at the

University. Fortunately, none of them knew Dan well. Pressure of work at Atkinson Stern had prevented me from attending more than a couple of University parties, and I had barely spoken to anyone in Astrophysics. Nevertheless I hid behind Maggie as we approached the door, and averted my eyes from any of the people leaving.

I assumed that they had repaired to the Cottage Loaf after the Faculty Meeting finished – not that surprising as I'd told Jackie where we ladies were having our get-together, and it was close to the university. But where was Jackie? She should be coming out with the rest.

I found out why she wasn't when we got inside. She was still at a table in a quiet, dark corner at the back of the dining area. She was on a banquette, pinned behind the table and against the wall by a tall, tanned man with long, greasy hair. He was talking animatedly to her, but she didn't look like she was enjoying his attention. While I was watching she tried to stand up but he didn't move to let her out. On the contrary, he pushed her down, none too gently. This wasn't flirting, I was relieved to see, this was borderline sexual assault.

"Isn't that Mrs Richards over there?" said Maggie, who had seen where I was looking.

"Yes, it is," I said. "Excuse me a moment."

I settled my handbag more firmly over my shoulder and strode as quickly as my four-inch heels would allow to their table, my impressive feminine rear swinging aggressively from side to side.

"Hello, Mrs Richards," I said. "The girls and I were wondering if you would like to join us."

"No, she wouldn't," said the man, turning to me. He had a strong American accent. "Now fuck off, bitch..."

"That would be lovely, Nancy," said Jackie, in a shaky voice. "Thank you for inviting me."

She stood up quickly while the man's attention was on me. He ignored her.

"Are you still here?" he asked, standing up.

He was at least six inches taller than me, and menacing, but I was Nancy, the cleaning lady, and I wasn't afraid of any *man*.

"Yes, I am," I said firmly, staring directly – up – into his eyes. "And I'm *staying* here until the lady joins me – and my friends over there..."

I turned and pointed at the gaggle of maids by the door who were now moving slowly towards us. None of them had any idea what was going on, but they obviously sensed something interesting was happening, and they were well up for it, bless their hearts.

The greasy man realised he was outnumbered. None of us would be a match for him of course, but any further confrontation would have consequences. He cursed and got up to go.

"I'm sorry," Jackie said to me, "I didn't introduce you. This is Dr Fulbrooke, he's a visiting scholar from New York. Dr Fulbrooke, this is Nancy Potts, my... best friend."

Fulbrooke left without a word, brushing past the bemused maids.

Jackie emerged from behind the table and threw her arms around me. I could hear my fellow cleaning ladies gasping with surprise. My wife quickly realised that such intimacy wasn't appropriate between mistress and maid and let go of me. She brushed herself down and recovered her composure.

"I'm sorry, Nancy," she said, so that they could all hear. "It's just that I was so glad to see you. I was afraid that horrible man was going to *rape* me, or something!"

"That's quite all right, Madam, I'm glad *we* could help," I said, emphasising the *we*. "It's lucky we chose the same pub tonight."

"You will join us, won't you, Mrs Richards?" said Maggie.

"I'd love to, but only if you promise to call me 'Jackie' tonight."

"Well... perhaps just for tonight, Madam," I said. "I mean, *Jackie*."

"I'll buy the first round, shall I?" she said. "Why don't you come and help me, Nancy?"

So after taking all the girls' orders, my wife and I made our way to the bar, while the others went to find a large table.

"I can't believe you did it *again*," Jackie said to me when the others were out of earshot, "and even dressed like that! You look fantastic, by the way. I told you that dress would work."

"Thank you, Madam," I said. It didn't feel right to call her 'Jackie'. "But you'll really have to stop going to bars alone," I added, with a grin.

"I *wasn't* alone. There were eight of us, but when everyone else got up to go he trapped me. I don't think the others even realised we weren't with them when they left. I'll have to have a word with my boss about Fulbrooke tomorrow."

We had a marvellous girly evening. My fellow cleaning ladies made Jackie welcome unreservedly.

Week 3 – Saturday

Again Jackie declared I wasn't to wear a maid's uniform at all over the weekend. I was to be her best girlfriend and roommate, Nancy. We made breakfast together and while we were eating, I asked her what she wanted to do. She said that she had some phone calls to make, and could we decide after that?

She spent a lot of time on the phone that morning and rushed off to meet someone at the university in the afternoon. I couldn't help being a little worried after last night's encounter, but she assured me she was getting together with a woman from another department she knew from tennis. She said she needed to check on something but didn't want to talk about

it because if she was wrong it could embarrass someone else. It all sounded very mysterious, but I felt I had to trust her. I spent the morning reading my romance novels.

Jackie was back by mid-afternoon looking smug. I was getting fed up with her secrecy and told her so, but she promised that I would know all about it soon, and that in the end I would agree that it was better that I let her tell me everything in her own time. To make it up to me she had booked a table at my favourite steak house, which we didn't go to very often as she wasn't a big meat eater.

I was a little concerned that I might be recognised there but she assured me that no one could possibly connect Nancy with Dan. By now I knew she was right, as long as I remembered my feminine mannerisms and didn't blunder into the Gents by mistake. So we put on our best frocks; did our hair as extravagantly as we could; and applied our evening make-up.

Jackie booked a taxi so she could drink her fill and we set off as two ladies for a posh meal. At the restaurant we discreetly kept our hands off each other and restricted our conversation to feminine topics, something that was coming more easily to me now after a diet of *Cosmopolitan* and romance novels. Jackie struggled not to laugh out loud as I riffed on babies, periods, lingerie, and make-up – ironically, but as to the manner born.

She was especially vigorous in the bedroom that night.

Week 4 – Sunday

We fully expected Bill to call again today. I still wasn't keen to see him when I wasn't in my maid uniform – quite irrationally I felt it gave me a kind of anonymity – but I agreed with Jackie that it couldn't be avoided as he had missed seeing me the previous week. In the end he appeared late in the afternoon. He looked harassed. I assumed our project wasn't panning out as he'd hoped. Little did I know...

I was upstairs when he arrived, and Jackie answered the door. It was the maid's day off, after all. She called for me – Nancy – to come down. Since we weren't going out anywhere, I was wearing one of my shabbier dresses, an old-fashioned, shapeless purple number with an abstract floral design.

I had expected Bill would be used to seeing me as Nancy by now but he still did a double-take as he saw me coming down the stairs in my heels, one hand on the bannister, the other out wide for balance, my huge butt inevitably swinging from side to side. I kept my eyes cast down, of course. A maid has no business looking her mistress's guests in the eye, even on her day off.

Jackie led the way into the sitting room. Bill held the door open for me. I thanked him, without smiling.

"So do you have diary entries and questionnaire forms for me?" he asked hopefully, as we sat down.

"I'm afraid that won't be happening, Bill," Jackie said. "In fact, this will be our last meeting – on this sham project of yours or for any other reason."

Bill turned pale. I looked at her curiously. What was she talking about?

“I think we’ve subjected my husband to quite enough humiliation on bogus grounds. We thought we were doing you a favour – helping out a friend who was in difficulty! I’m not sure what has fuelled this spiteful behaviour on your part, what imagined slight you’re getting your revenge for. Or is it just jealousy? In any case, it’s over, and you’d better keep your mouth shut about the whole thing. Any attempt on your part to expose Dan as Nancy – to his firm or anyone else – and we’ll report you to the university authorities.”

“It’s not like that, really! I...” Bill began.

But I couldn’t keep quiet any longer. “What are you talking about, Jackie? What makes you think...”

She looked at me pityingly. “I’m so sorry, love. *There is no ‘domme-sub’ project.* He made it all up. I wanted to tell you sooner, but I wasn’t sure until yesterday afternoon. After that it seemed better not to spoil the day. I decided to wait until Bill came round here so we could have it all out with him.”

I slumped back in my seat in shock, my legs wide apart in a most unladylike posture.

“What did you do?” Bill seemed close to panic. “Who have you told?”

“No one – yet. I spent two hours yesterday with one of your department’s admin staff searching through research records.”

“Who? I’ll have her fired!”

“No, you won’t,” Jackie said, sharply, “any more than you’ll expose Dan. If you try, I’ll make sure it’s the end of your career.”

“It’s a massive breach of confidentiality!” Bill blustered.

“Actually, it isn’t,” Jackie said. “I checked. Sure, a project’s data and findings are confidential until you’re ready to publish – and anyway we didn’t try to look at anything like that – but University regulations require that the *existence* of a research project, with a brief description, is in the public domain. For obvious reasons.”

She glanced in my direction and realised that they weren’t obvious to me.

“All Government funding bodies and Private Sector sponsors insist on it, so that colleagues at other universities can avoid duplication. Academics can’t afford to waste scarce funds re-inventing the wheel.”

“But why, Bill?” I asked quietly. Jackie’s theories of revenge or jealousy didn’t seem plausible to me. “Was this some sort of *prank*?”

Jackie snorted. “If so, it was totally unfunny and bloody expensive.” She was getting angry now. “You wanted this role-playing to break us up, didn’t you? You thought that I’d lose my respect for Dan when I saw him dressed as a woman and pretending to be a maid.”

Bill was slumped in defeat. “Something like that, I suppose,” he said in almost a whisper. “I’m not sure quite *what* I wanted. I just couldn’t stand seeing you two... together... any longer, while I...”

He stood up and made for the door. Jackie leapt up and barred his way.

“Not so fast,” she snapped. “You owe us more than that.”

He sat down again.

“I – I don’t know what to say. The whole thing has turned into a nightmare! When I saw Dan’s diaries I couldn’t believe what was happening. Oh, it started as I’d expected. He was hating everything and getting more and more stressed out. I was sure he’d give it all up and storm back home, and that would lead to a major crisis. He might even have some sort of breakdown.”

Jackie and I looked at each other in disbelief. This was our oldest friend. When did he suddenly start wanting us to split up, and me to have a breakdown? He went stumbling on.

“But when he started maid training, he cheered up and started enjoying himself! I couldn’t believe a rich, powerful alpha male like him was actually enjoying mindless unskilled labour! And not just that, but *subservience* – being a servant – and doing it all *as a woman!* Then, I thought, ‘That’s OK. Surely Jackie will hate this? Her macho husband, turning into a sissy?’ But *your* reaction was even weirder than his. You thought the whole thing was *sexy!* I could only conclude that this extreme form of role-playing has had a completely unexpected effect. It hasn’t brought out any latent *domme-sub* behaviour, but it’s still turned you both into perverts!”

He ground to a halt, realising that his words were only making us angrier. There was silence. Jackie was steaming and I was just... feeling lost, betrayed by my best friend. But we couldn’t argue with his last point. We *were* perverts, though not the kind he’d apparently had in mind. I had found another totally different personality inside myself, while Jackie had... what? Discovered Lesbian tendencies? No, we still made love in traditional heterosexual fashion, albeit in increasingly exotic positions and locations. (Nancy would have a helluva job cleaning that dining room table. Or perhaps Dan would just buy a new one.) Jackie just got more ‘turned on’ when her husband was dressed as her maid. I’m not sure there *was* a name for her fetish.

Also, Bill and I had had many heated arguments over the years on just about everything: religion, politics, art, revolution, evolution, feminism – you name it. But I don’t think I’d ever realised what a sexist pig he was till now. Being a maid and a cleaning lady is perfectly respectable and a lot harder work than being a bloody psychology professor! I would have given voice to my feelings in no uncertain terms, but two things were stopping me. One, I probably would have thought much the same as him three weeks ago; and two, I *was* Nancy, at least for the moment. I was a maid in the presence of her betters.

“I think I should get back to the kitchen,” I said, quietly. “I left a wash in; there’ll be ironing to do; or some cleaning...”

I felt a tear run down my face. I got up and made for the door.

Bill jumped up and made to grab my arm, but Jackie was too quick for him.

“You leave her alone,” she hissed. I wasn’t so fuzzy that I missed the personal pronoun. “You need to get out of here – *now!*” she shouted at Bill.

I went out into the hall.

“It was all for love,” I heard Bill say, plaintively. “Really...”

I closed the kitchen door behind me. A minute later the front door opened and was slammed shut shortly afterwards. Jackie came into the kitchen and threw her arms around me.

“Are you all right, babe?” she said. “I’m so sorry! I should have prepared you better for that, but we were having such a good time yesterday. I didn’t want to spoil the weekend. Now I’ve just made it all much worse.”

“I’m OK,” I said. “It’s just too many surprises and shocks coming together. I think you’re right to have been concerned. I’ve been overdoing it for too long; overwork, tiredness, stress. I’m in worse shape than I thought. That probably explains why I’ve been so content with this stupid play-acting – it’s temporary relief. A chance to switch off.”

“Maybe, or maybe you’ve accidentally found the perfect safety valve. Stress relief by pretending to be a servant of the opposite sex!”

“Hey, I haven’t been *pretending*; I’ve been working my big round butt off! But after this afternoon’s revelations I feel like I’m back to square one.”

“No, *no!* It’s just a temporary setback,” she insisted. “You can’t expect to fix ten years of overwork in a fortnight, and you have another two and a half months of sabbatical. You should carry on doing whatever makes you happy.”

“You mean keep on being Nancy?” I was incredulous. “When the whole thing was a... *sham?*”

“*Bill’s project* may have been a sham but the beneficial effect of being Nancy was *real*.” She smiled. “Besides you’ve made commitments; you can’t let Maggie and the Travellers’ Rest down, can you?”

“What about you?”

“Well, no, you can’t let your mistress down either.”

“No, I meant...”

“I know what you meant, babe, and I promise I’m sticking with you. Dan, Nancy or ‘Dancy’, they’re all the same to me. You’re the man, woman and person I love.”

“But the whole ‘Nancy the maid’ thing – it’s just a fantasy. It seems to have gone well for a couple of weeks, but it can’t work in the longer term...”

"I don't see why not," she said. "Nobody's suspected, have they? Not even Maggie, and she's sharp as a tack and has worked right alongside you for days on end. Let's face it, babe, you're *really good* at being Nancy. You can be her for as long as you like."

"Don't you think it's all a bit... kinky?"

"Maybe, but so what? It seems to be doing you good and you're enjoying yourself. It's harmless and we both want it, don't we? Our little perversions intersect! Besides, you can go back to being Dan whenever you want."

She hugged me and smiled.

"Quite ironic, isn't it? Bill was hoping the role-playing would change you so I wouldn't want you anymore. It looks like *I'm* the one who's the more perverted, and I want you more than ever..."

* * *

After Jackie had calmed me down I made us some tea. She offered but I insisted. I'm still the maid; making tea is *my* job. We sat down again in the lounge to review.

"So you were at the university yesterday afternoon. What were you doing?"

"The admin I mentioned – she's one of my tennis partners. I was talking with her after a game last week. She's not actually a secretary; I only said that to throw Bill off the scent. She's a research student in the Psychology Department. She's currently looking for ideas for her PhD. She mentioned that she'd been browsing the project files to see if anyone's doing anything interesting. I asked her about Bill's research. I claimed that he'd told me about an interesting project he was running and she took me back to her office to look it up. She showed me all the Department's current work but there was nothing like it. Don't worry – I just told her I must have made a mistake, so she knows nothing about it."

"I'm surprised Bill didn't claim it was secret 'off the books' research, or something. After all, if it had been real, it would have been quite sensitive."

"True, but it still wouldn't have been allowed without at least an Abstract being recorded on the system, so either way he's dead meat if we tell anyone."

"His word against ours?"

"Maybe, but I think you're safe. After all who's going to believe that a partner at Atkinson Stern has been spending his sabbatical as a cross-dressing maid?"

"He's got several pages of my hand-written diary as proof."

"Oh I hadn't thought of that!" she admitted. "I'll get them back for you," she said, resolutely. "I don't think he'll make any trouble for us. You should have seen his face as he left. He looked... broken."

"I heard him say something about it being 'all for love'. What do you think he meant?"

“No idea,” she said dismissively.

She reached for a biscuit. But I knew her – she was looking shifty.

“He wanted to break us up so he could take you away from me?” I suggested.

“No, I don’t think that was it, exactly,” she said, turning back to me. “In more than ten years he’s never shown the slightest interest in me... that way. Not even a kiss under the mistletoe at Christmas.”

“Well what then?”

She sighed. “I’m going to have to spell it out for you, aren’t I? How many serious girlfriends has Bill had since you were at school together?”

I tried to think. Came up with nothing. Sure there’d been girls, but none lasted more than a month.

“Exactly,” she said when I made no reply. “Bill is one of those gay guys who has struggled even to admit it to himself. I know, it’s ridiculous in this day and age, but it still happens. I’ve seen him looking at you... oddly... but until today I never made the connection. I think he’s been in love with you for ages. That’s what this project has been about – to break us up so he could swoop in to comfort you and win you for himself. He probably hoped that living as a woman would make you doubt your own sexuality, making it all the more likely you’d accept a male lover.”

I looked at her in horror. If she was right... Of course, she was right! She was *Jackie*.

“Yes... yes, it’s all quite plausible, isn’t it?” I said, sadly.

“It was quite clever actually. I’m pretty sure he tried to set me up with Fulbrooke as well, thinking I’d turn to a real man while my husband was away.”

“Away and being a sissy maid,” I added glumly.

She rushed to reassure me that she had never thought of me that way. All I could think was, *poor Bill*. Not that my sympathy would extend to seeing him again – ever.

* * *

That afternoon we moved back into our own home. Over the next few weeks Nancy the maid became a familiar figure there. We weren’t that close to any of our neighbours, and none of them recognised me. When anyone asked, they were told that Dan was away on an overseas secondment.

During working hours, I was the humble cleaner and lady’s maid. I wore my much-loved uniforms with cap and apron. I still curtsied to my mistress, and I called her *Madam*. That was part of my persona as Nancy. Jackie eventually got used to it and happily told me off if I was ever too familiar when I was on duty.

She also had a habit of sneaking up on me and unzipping my dress and exposing my bulging bra and knickers. I would then have to do my chores half-dressed until my uniform fell off, at which point she would push me down onto the sitting room hearth rug and have her way with me.

I could feel a decade of stress easing away.

As soon as the working day was over I changed into casual clothes – usually a nice housedress or a blouse and a comfy skirt – and we were lovers again. Jackie also encouraged me always to sleep in curlers, bonnet and a frilly nightie. My ultra-feminine night attire still drove her wild.

Bill settled the Transformations bill and returned all our diary entries without being asked. His covering note just said, *Sorry for everything*. We heard that he left the university shortly afterwards on a secondment somewhere in California. He didn't call to say goodbye.

So for the moment, we carried on as planned, except that now I was *three* people: Nancy the maid, Nancy the roommate on the maid's time off, and occasionally Dan. I was always happiest as the maid. This still surprised me a little – the novelty wasn't wearing off – but I'd stopped worrying about it.

I continued to work three mornings a week at the Travellers' Rest hotel. I also occasionally helped out my fellow maids at Home Counties Housekeeping when they needed someone to fill in. I developed a reputation as a sweet girl who was always willing and reliable.

My measly (by Dan's standards) earnings from the hotel, together with my wages as Jackie's maid, continued to be paid into Nancy's bank account, never reaching a level where she would have to pay tax. As her, I tried to live off my earnings. I still didn't drive and I took public transport whenever Jackie couldn't give me a lift.

She never really understood why I didn't avail myself of Dan's fortune, but being poor was a key part of Nancy's persona, and I didn't want to lose that. But Dan paid for me to undergo a course of laser treatment to rid myself of all my body hair. Such a relief to need no more waxing!

At weekends I was Jackie's roommate and best girlfriend. I wore my growing collection of dresses, supplemented by new skirts and tops. We ate out and shopped together. We went to the movies, the theatre, even to the opera, as two ladies.

It soon became obvious to Maggie that Jackie and I had become more than just mistress and maid, and when I let it drop to her we were looking for things to do together in the evenings and weekends, she persuaded us to try ballroom dancing. She'd just started and assured us it was tremendous fun. We'd always intended to take it up again, so we bought ourselves expensive dresses with exotic petticoats, and higher heels than I'd ever tottered on so far, and went along.

I was a little apprehensive. I was afraid that I'd struggle with the female role. To go backwards in high heels the lady has to rely on the support of her stronger male partner. In heels I was

over five feet ten, and my male muscles and prostheses made me *heavy*. Would there be a man tall enough and strong enough to take me on?

I was also afraid there would be lots of men ready to sweep my beautiful wife off her feet. After all, ballroom dancing cheek to cheek can be... *intimate*. But it all worked out. We both had plenty of partners, and we quietly let it be known that we 'lived together' and had no real trouble with our men.

And the third person in this *ménage a quatre*? These days Dan only appeared in bed after lights out, and even then he was a submissive Dan, on the bottom, and trying harder than ever to please his mistress.

Epilogue

My three-month sabbatical passed all too quickly but there is no way I can go back. I am much more Nancy than Dan now and we both prefer it that way. I am relaxed and happy. I love being a uniformed housemaid and looking after my wonderful wife. I'm fulfilled.

I also love working at the hotel and the company of the other girls. I join in their conversations about boyfriends and babies enthusiastically. Maggie and I often meet outside of working hours. I occasionally baby-sit for her and have gotten to know her little daughter who calls me 'Auntie Nancy'. Sometimes Jackie joins us and treats us to an outing that we two maids couldn't have afforded.

The hard physical work keeps me fit and healthy. Nancy might be fat and forty but the person inside her is slim and fitter than ever.

I have resigned my partnership at Atkinson Stern and sold my equity. We can easily live off our assets for the rest of our lives now if we have to. But, under the impression I was leaving because of stress and overwork, the partners were sympathetic and offered me as much freelance work as I wanted. They were probably afraid I would sue them.

I was hesitant but Jackie advised me not to break with the firm completely, and I eventually agreed. I can do most of Dan's work from home in my maid's uniform – with video-conferencing turned off! I sit at my old desk at home feeling deliciously naughty. What is a maid doing at her master's computer when she should be dusting and vacuuming?

Nevertheless I'm still interested in finance and I try to keep up with the markets. I do research and financial analysis; but it's a relief not to have to give presentations or write proposals anymore. I just draft reports and send e-mails. A couple of times I have very nearly signed myself as 'Nancy Potts'; I feel a fraud to be calling myself 'Dan Richards'.

I do have to attend the occasional meeting at the office. So I have reluctantly got rid of my gorgeous blonde perm and Jackie has given me a unisex bob in my original colour. By combing my hair differently and putting it in a man-style pony tail I can look like a slightly Bohemian version of my old self.

The first time I put on one of Dan's suits again, with my lovely big boobies removed and no abdominal prosthesis, I was terrified that people would see me as a fake – a silly, uneducated cleaning lady pretending to be a professional man! I almost cried!

Fortunately I made the change a day or two early so that I could practise walking, talking and sitting like a male again. In my flat men's shoes, and without my heavy prostheses, 'how to be Dan' came back to me eventually.

I put on my expensive men's wristwatch and checked my wallet, which was exactly as I had left it more than a month earlier. Everything fell into place as though I had never been away. It did take me a while to get used to driving my Porsche though.

Jackie and I were actually both glad to see Dan again, especially as we knew I could go back to being Nancy whenever I wanted. We went out together as man and wife quite a bit in the next few days, and it was fine. We put in an appearance at all our old haunts, as people were beginning to suspect that I had gone off and left my wife. Not that we had many close friends now that Bill was no longer in the picture.

The first time I went back to Atkinson Stern was a shock. They had given my old office to my assistant and I had to sit at a 'Hot Desk' in the open-plan area. But I was invited to a number of planning sessions to bring me up to speed with my clients.

Henceforward my responsibilities would be limited to financial advisory work and brainstorming options for investments. It was a relief not to be involved in strategic planning, budget meetings, training, recruitment, and all the other stressful decision-making involved with running a multi-million-pound business. Over the first year of these new arrangements I only billed about 30 days of work, but grossed more than fifty grand.

But I expect Dan will be appearing less and less often in future. When I go back to being Nancy, I brush my hair out and use copious amounts of spray to restore it to my favourite feminine style. Also as a working-class woman I'm in the habit of wearing a headscarf when I'm out of doors and my maid's cap inside.

Weirdly, I now find it hard to get to sleep with no curlers in. Jackie suggested I wear my sleep bonnet anyway, and that has helped.

A couple of times my generous mistress has treated me to a trip to the salon. We go together to get our hair done and have a mani-pedi. At first I was concerned that as her husband I really shouldn't be enjoying such a feminine experience, but Madam told me not to be a silly girl, and just to lie back and enjoy it. I needed to make up my mind. Which did I want to be – a happy maid or a miserable banker? She was right of course, as ever. I'm Nancy now, and very happy. Dan is just a disguise I have to put on for a couple of days every few weeks.

* * *

What else has happened? Oh yes, Jackie bought me some more maid's dresses: a vintage uniform that makes me feel like I'm in *Downton Abbey*, and a gorgeous French Maid's outfit together with a long blonde wig. She likes me to be 'Fifi from Montmartre' on Saturday nights at home. I think I look pretty good, and she can't keep her hands off me!

“Ooh la la, Madame!” I squeal as she chases me round the kitchen and has her way with me.

She has also bought me some more seriously sexy lingerie in pink chiffon from Victoria’s Secret, which Nancy could never have afforded. I drive us both crazy when I wear it.

The other good news was that, with not having to do housework, and with my help with her admin, spreadsheets and project plans – not to mention getting dressed smartly – Jackie was able to concentrate more on her research. She has published two papers in the last six months and has been confirmed as Reader in her Department – the youngest they have ever appointed. (This academic rank, she told me, is like ‘a Professor without a Chair’.)

The promotion means that she is on her way. She will probably be offered tenure as a full professor soon, though she might have to go to another university. Then she and her faithful maid might have to move. If it’s overseas we will have to worry about Nancy’s passport, work visa, and so on, but that’s a problem for another day.