

**J A M E S J C R A F T**

***THEY'RE  
THE GIRLS FOR  
THE JOB***

by James J. Craft  
A Crossed Fiction Book

illustrations by blackshirtboy



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joe@sixpacksite.com  
www.sixpacksite.com

## PEACE AND HARMONY

Pete and Harmon were *not* friends.

Not in *any* sense of the word.

In fact, in the beginning, they could barely tolerate each other.

Both young men worked at the same firm in the marketing department. Both had been hired at the same time, to perform the same job – and both had very same, very low impressions of the other.

Pete was a hard worker and had a very positive outlook on most things. His coworkers found him to be very charming and competent. Harmon, on the other hand, while also a hard-worker, was decidedly narrow in his views and didn't get along well with most of the staff. He was constantly disagreeing with his superiors, and often complained about how incompetent they were – and how completely under-appreciated he was. “Harm,” as he was known in the office, also believed Pete to be talentless hack, who got by on his looks.

For his part – though Pete would never admit to anyone – he always believed Harmon to be a negative, lazy, nag.

So as long as they were working together, they kept their distance as far apart as they could.

...That is, until they both were simultaneously downsized.

They were both given their notice and severance in the same sixty-second span, and when each looked at the other's reaction, they knew that they had both instantly become equals.

Unemployed, destined to be homeless within a few months equals.

So, as they say, it was the ‘beginning of a beautiful friendship.’

...Sort of.

It was Pete who had offered the truce first, when he suggested that the two of them share accommodations to help alleviate the pressure of having no money. Harmon wasn't sold on the idea. In fact, when Pete first suggested it, he looked at his advisory as if he had grown a third-eye.

“Move where?” he guffawed.

Harm liked his privacy, and didn't think that idea of sharing an apartment with someone that he didn't like was a good idea, at all.

“Suit yourself,” Pete shrugged, “But here's my number just in case you change your mind,” he handed Harmon a piece of paper with his phone number scrawled on it.

Harmon took the number with a tentative glance, and kept it in his wallet... just in case. He was determined to not have to use it. But after failing to find work for several weeks, he began to reconsider the concept. He had planned on finding work fairly quickly – unfortunately the economic reality wasn't quite as rosy as he had hoped.

So one afternoon, after a grueling day of job-hunting, he took the number out of his wallet and dialed Pete up, "So..." he began in a defeated tone, "What did you have in mind?"

Pete explained that he had signed a long-term lease on his somewhat large condo years ago, at a very affordable rate, and if split with Harmon it would save both young men a substantial amount. To make matters worse... or better... Harmon's own rental agreement was conveniently set to expire quite soon, so it seemed to be a no-brainer.

So that afternoon, Harmon decided to take his former co-worker up on his offer to co-habitate... begrudgingly. That was how two men, completely at odd with one another, became roommates.

As he expected, Pete was just as ridiculously chipper and unrealistically optimistic as a roommate as he was as a co-worker. Harm prayed that he would have a job in a relatively short matter of time, and that his living arrangements would be temporary, at best. A couple of months at worst.

The first few days as roomies were predictably tense. Harmon moved into the small spare bedroom, still partially cluttered with Pete's belongings and put the bulk of his own possessions into storage. He figured that all he needed was a few good suits, a couple of pairs of jeans, and plenty of clean socks and underwear.

Both young men had divested themselves of such luxuries like personal computers, in an effort so save money while they job-hunted, so the morning job-hunt consisted of scanning the newspapers on the sofa.

Pete called it 'old-school' job hunting. Harmon called it 'awful'.

"This is the twenty-first century – I don't know if you got that memo yet Neanderthal man." Harmon said. "I can't believe I let you talk me into selling my computer." He shook his head as he scanned the want ads.

"Oh, shut up" Pete mumbled without looking up from his paper, "just find a fucking job and quit your complaining."

Harmon sighed, "Ugh! It's all freakin' grunt work, man. I'm a college-educated marketing professional." He rubbed his forehead with his hand, "I refuse to work for minimum wage."

Pete tried to ignore the sound of Harmon's whining. It didn't work.

"I mean look at this..." he carried on, "'Support staff for top rated warehousing firm needed.' You know what that says to me?" he asked rhetorically. "Flunkies



wanted, apply within.” He shook his head, “Unreal.” He flipped the page and scanned through the next set of ads, “*Ha!* Get a load of this one Petey... Prestigious supper club requires qualified servers to assist it high-profile clientele. Ha! I bet!” he chortled, “It’s probably some hole in the wall greasy spoon.”

Pete turned and grabbed the paper out of his roommate’s hand, “What’s that?”

Harmon growled angrily at him, ripping the paper back, “Hey man, I was looking at that...”

“No you weren’t, you loser,” Pete growled back, “You haven’t ‘looked’ at anything. You just keep complaining about how your perfect little dream job isn’t posted in the local paper.”

“So?” he slowly allowed Pete to take the paper back from him, “Do *you* want to work at the *prestigious* supper club?”

Pete looked the ad over again, “It’s address is right downtown... and not in the sleazy part either... its like... *right* downtown. You know how much you can make in tips at a place like that?”

“Tips?” Harmon stared at his roommate like he’d grown a third eye. “Are you for real?”

Pete nodded, still looking very serious, “I dated this beautiful girl back in college...” he began.

“I doubt it,” Harmon interjected.

Pete continued on, as if he hadn’t heard it. “She worked at this high-end restaurant in town. ” He looked down at the ad again, “Maybe even this one... I don’t know. But she used to make a *killing* on tips. All those rich people trying to out-tip each other, it’s ridiculous.”

Harmon just shook his head, “Well okay then ‘Sally Server’” he muttered, “You do that. You go be a manservant to the upper class. Have fun working for peanuts. Let me know how you make out.”

Pete could feel his blood pressure rising. *This* was why he didn’t like Harmon. Harmon was a pompous idiot.

“I might just do that!” He exclaimed as he folded the paper in half and stood up, “And I *will* let you know how I ‘make out’ when I’m bringing home money and you’re still sulking on the sofa.” With that, he exited the room, leaving a fuming Harmon to scan through the remainder of the want ads alone.

“I’m not *sulking*,” he pouted quietly under his breath.



The very next day, an eager Peter made a call to the ‘exclusive supper club’ in the want-ad, to inquire about the position they were advertising.

“Sapphire Club, Good morning this is Amy speaking. How may I help you?” the voice on the other end of the phone sounded sweet and cheerful.

“Um, hi...” Pete began, “I’m calling about the ad in the paper... you’re looking for servers?”

There was a muffled noise on the other hand, as if the girl was covering the receiver with her hand. It sounded like she was telling people that ‘we got one.’

“Well hello there,” she finally resumed her end of the conversation with Pete, “Yes, you’re interested in joining us here at Sapphires?”

“Well... I’m interested in learning more...” Pete tried not to sound too eager.

“Of course,” the girl replied cheerfully, “Let’s start with your name, shall we?”

“I’m Peter,” Peter replied.

“Peter?” the girl repeated, “Well Peter... have you ever been to our club before?”

Pete wasn’t certain how to answer, “Well um... no... not really.”

“Oh...” Amy sounded disappointed on the other end of the phone.

Pete decided to lie. “But I used to know someone who did...”

“Oh?” Amy sounded *very* interested, “What was his name?”

“Um,” Pete scratched his head, he was really caught now, “Hank.”

Amy’s voice changed, “Ohhhhh. I remember Hank. He was a real cutie. So... Peter, what kind of experience do you have?”

“Uh,” Pete thought about lying again, but decided against it. After all – it hadn’t gone very well for him a moment ago, “I’ve never really...”

“It’s probably better that way,” she cut him off, “We kind of like to start off with people who are less experienced in the hospitality industry anyway. So you’ve never worked in a restaurant before, is that right?”

“Uh,” Pete paused, trying to soak in what she had just told him, “Uh... no. No I haven’t.”

“Excellent!” the girl bubbled, “I think you’d be a great candidate for Sapphires, Pete. When can you come in and see us?”

“Uh...” he never thought to have planned that far ahead, “Anytime...”

“Great!” Amy exclaimed, “How soon can you get down here?”

Pete smiled. This was going to be a *very* good day.



The next day Pete was dressed and ready to head for work quite early in the morning. His interview had gone *very* well, and Amy had hired him on the spot. Harmon on the other hand, had barely moved from the same place he had been seated at for days.

“So,” Pete asked him condescendingly, “How goes the sulking?”

Harmon narrowed his eyes. “Fuck off,” he muttered, and then went back to the want ads. He had purchased three newspapers today and was determined to find meaningful employment *somewhere* inside of them.

“Ohhhhhhhh,” Pete exclaimed, “That’s real mature. Well just so know, I’m on my way to an actual job, you know... ’cuz I want to be able to buy some nice new things around here.”

“Screw off,” Harmon looked up from his papers, “Okay? Just screw off. You want to go be a busboy for bratty billionaires? You go ahead. Me? I’m going to wait and find a *real* job, okay?”

“Whatever,” Pete muttered, “Just remember that we’ve got enough to cover rent for a only few months and then my serving bratty billionaires will be paying all the bills, okay?”

With that he grabbed his coat and headed for the door. *Idiot*, he said to himself as he passed his roommate.

As the door closed behind Pete, Harmon looked up from his paper, towards the door. “Idiot” he muttered.



Later... *much* later that day, a very jovial Pete returned to the apartment. Harmon had been out to the copy shop, preparing stacks of resumes to send out to prospective employers in the city. He had commandeered the kitchen table for use as a staging area, to tri-fold his resume, cover letter and references, then stuff them into envelopes. He looked up from his work and saw the smile on Pete’s face.

“I hate to ask,” Harmon muttered. “But how was the first day as a *waitress*?” he sneered.

“It was great!” Pete beamed, “Right now I’m a ‘hit.’”

Harmon raised an eyebrow in a curious expression, “A hit?”

“Yeah... Host-In-Training. H-I-T.” Pete smiled, “It’s an entry level position, but I’m sure I’ll be moving up pretty quickly.”

“Yeah... right... From ‘hit’ to ‘shit,’” Harmon chortled. “As in, shit job. What a waste. You’re a goddamn college-educated marketing specialist Peter – and you’re now in-training to escort people to their fucking snot-assed tables in a fucking snot-assed trendy shit-house restaurant. Well congrad-u-fucking-lations.” He shook his head and went back to his envelopes.

Peter’s face turned red with anger. “Yeah? Well at least I’m prepared to actually *do* something to make some money around here, unlike *some* people. That’s what I told them... I’ll do *whatever* they need me to!” He lifted up an

envelope of his own. “That’s why I was so late, because we don’t have a DVD player – I had to go to the library to watch the training video.” He idly scratched his arm. That reminded him of the other things he did, showing his dedication to being gainfully employed. “Oh, and I agreed to get vaccinated again – even though I’m pretty sure I got all my shots when I was a kid.” He lifted his sleeve to reveal a bandage on his shoulder, “because I’m prepared to actually *work* Harmon, instead of reading fricking newspapers and sending out stupid resumes for a job that you’re *never* going to get!”

With that, Pete stormed off, slamming the door to his room behind him.

“Fuck you!” Harmon called after him.

“*Fuck you too!*” Pete’s voice replied, through the wall.



The two roommates barely talked for most of the following week. Pete was off to the library to watch to his training video most mornings before Harmon was even awake, and returned late in the evening to see him either reading over his paper, or stuffing another envelope.

Finally Pete decided to try and bury the hatchet, “So...” he said one day after returning from his training, “How’s the job-hunting going?”

Harmon looked up, half in shock, as if he never expected his roommate to talk to him again, “Um...” he began, “It’s... going good.”

“Cool,” Pete smiled.

The two stood in awkward silence for a moment before Harmon realized that Pete was likely looking for him to ask how his new job was going.

“So...” he began, “how’s your training going?”

Pete smiled. He was impressed that Harmon had actually been paying attention. “It’s going good. They paid me for the training... and I start hosting tomorrow night.”

“Wow,” Harmon pretended to be impressed, “How much have you made so far?”

Pete scrunched his face and looked up in the corner of his eyes, “Well... it isn’t *that* much... but it’ll pay for my new uniform – my new shoes.”

“New shoes?” Harmon looked down at his roommate’s feet. Beneath the slim-fitting black pants and crisp white collared shirt, was an odd-looking pair of wedge heeled sandals, like you might expect to find on a cute college girl. Harmon paused, blinked, and then spoke. “*Those?*”

Pete nodded, “They’re some special orthopedic ones that are designed for hosts and hostesses... ’cuz we’re on our feet so much. You see, the idea is...”



“So basically,” Harm cut Pete off as he rolled his eyes, “You have nothing to show for a weeks worth of work but a pair of lame shoes and a new outfit that they make you wear but won’t provide themselves.”

“Kinda,” Pete muttered, looking down. “But pretty soon I’m going to be in the tip pool and that’s when the *big* money starts!” He chimed, “Just you wait and see!”

“Oh great,” Harmon mumbled, “I can’t wait.” He rolled his eyes and went back to his newspapers while his roommate skipped off to his room.

Harmon paused for a moment – was his roommate actually ‘skipping’? Such weird behavior. He shook his head and went back to his job hunting.



Harmon’s mood was significantly different the following day, after he finally received a call-back for one of the two hundred resumes that he had sent out. It was for a fast-growing call-center operator that was looking to expand its marketing department. On that morning, Harm was up early to shave and shower and get dressed in his suit. It was nice to be able to wear something other than jeans and a t-shirt again, though weeks of being house-bound had left his once-well-fitting suits, feeling a little on the tight side. He promised himself that he would eat better as soon as he got the job, which he was convinced was a shoe-in.

Speaking of shoes, it was also the first day of Pete’s new weird orthopedic comfort shoes. He wasn’t starting work until later that afternoon, but was determined to break in his new footwear well before then, and had decided to wear them around the apartment for the duration of the day.

Harmon rolled his eyes when his roommate entered the kitchen in his new shoes, “Oh... *wow* Pete...” he mocked his roommate, “Nice shoes...”

Pete lifted his leg up before plopping it down on the coffee table for his roommate to view the footwear in question. “You like?” He modeled the pair of slip-ons with molded, ramped wedge heels that must have been over three inches high, after starting off as a thick platform sole beneath his toes.

“Oh yeah,” he chuckled, “I’m sure you’ll get *all* the boys with shoes like those... they look real ‘special.’” He lisped the ‘special’ and made quotation signs as he spoke the word.

“Say what you want, but these shoes are going to be helping to pay rent soon,” he smiled, “And I hope that you will be doing the same after your job interview this morning.”

“Yeah,” Harmon chortled. “Me too. Cause otherwise I might have to get a pair of those shoes and come work at your swanky restaurant too...” He chuckled loudly at the end of the sentence.

Pete’s face remained stoic. “It’s a supper club Harm, not a restaurant. And I’m sure they’d hire you if you wanted... They say that they are always looking for new people without any experience.”

Harmon shook his head and rolled his eyes at the same time. "I bet. Let's hope this job pans out... see you later on," he said as he grabbed his attaché case and headed for the door.

"Break a leg!" Pete called after him.

"What?" He stopped halfway through the door and turned towards his roommate.

"It's what they say in showbiz Harm. It means good luck," Pete explained, "It's what the other girls at the club say all the time." He smiled.

Harmon shook his head as he turned and left the apartment.

*Good god, I need to get away from this nut-bar,* he thought to himself as he walked to the elevator.



The results of Harmon's job interview weren't made known to him until several days later. Unfortunately, the company had been sold to an overseas conglomerate, and all marketing functions would be centralized there.

"Those Goddamned foreigners... taking all of our jobs," he muttered one day to his roommate as he flipped through the want ads again.

"Well," Pete smiled, "you can always get a job a job hosting like me?" He offered an over-sized grin to his downtrodden co-habitant, which looked almost silly and clown-like to Harmon. In fact, in the past few days, nearly everything Pete had said or done – or worn – was silly and clown-like to Harmon. It had started with the new jeans he had purchased... the skin-tight ones that clung to his body like they had almost been painted on.

Then there were his new t-shirts... also tight... though not quite 'painted.' Not to mention the new hairstyle he was sporting with his sideburns completely removed, and a spiky, somewhat girly-coifed style on what remained. Plus, there was Pete's pencil thin eyebrows. What the fuck was with *that* anyway?

"I ain't working as a fruity hostess Nancy – not after seeing what it's done to you," Harm coughed, motioning at Pete's new brows.

"Well I admit, that they weren't quite what I was expecting, looks-wise, but..." Harmon looked up, as if he could somehow see his own eyebrows.

"Well what *did* you expect Pete?" he chided his roommate, interrupting him again, "You went to a girly salon and they gave you a girly haircut and girly eyebrows... it's pretty obvious. They want you to be a girl."

"Shut up!" Pete lisped, bending his wrist as he spoke.

Harmon raised an eyebrow, unsure if he had done that as a joke, or if it had become a natural reflex for him.



A few days later, Harmon was sitting on his sofa reading his want ads, when there was a knock at the door.

“I’ll get it!” Pete called from his room. Harmon could hear him scampering to the door in his ramped shoes.

He opened the door to find two delivery men waiting, “Pete Vandermole?” One of them asked.

“That’s me,” Peter beamed.

“We’ve got a vanity for you?” the man said, quizzed by his own statement.

Pete clapped his hands together. “Oh goodie!” he giggled, “It’s here! It’s going into the first bedroom, please.” He pointed down the hall, then resumed clapping as the two men carried a large box into the apartment.

Harmon looked up from his want ads and raised an eyebrow. What the heck was his roommate getting a vanity for? And furthermore... what the *heck* was a vanity? And why was he spending his money on it instead of more important things... like a frickin’ computer?

“Omigawd” Pete tittered, “I’m so excited!”

“Wow...” was about all that Harmon could muster, as his roommate entered the room an hour later. Whatever it was that possessed him to wear a pair of ladies wedge shoes, and worse – *like* them – was now possessing him to buy strange furniture.

“I know...” Pete smiled, “I’m *so* excited. I’ve been wanting to be able to brush my hair and stuff in my bedroom for like... ever. Now you won’t have to wait for me in the bathroom to get all ready for work and stuff.”

Harmon looked at Pete’s expression. He was completely serious. He was actually convinced that he was helping Harmon out by buying a vanity for the bedroom where he could ‘do his hair’ in the morning. Wearing those freaky-assed shoes was starting to melt the poor boy’s brain, evidently.

“Well,” Harmon said, deliberately hesitant, “You know... I’m sure looking forward to spending more time in the bathroom,” he chuckled sarcastically.

Pete didn’t seem to get his lame attempt at humor, and just stared at him blankly.

“Listen,” Harmon said finally, “I *know* you’re big on your new job... but I gotta tell you man... you’re acting a little... ‘odd’ lately... and I just...”

Pete’s eyes looked like they were starting to tear up. Harmon chuckled nervously, and decided to abandon his conversation, “Oh... never mind. Thank *god* you can brush your hair in your room”

He shook his head in non-belief and walked away.



The days that followed saw Pete and his ‘odd’ behavior getting *more* ‘odd’. It continued the day that Harmon first noticed a pink handled razor blade in the bathtub one morning. He knew that the chances of Pete having had a girl over, without Harm seeing, were slim-to-none, so he could only deduce that his roommate had bought it.

“What’s with the pink razor?” he asked bluntly after exiting the bathroom. He saw his roomie sitting at his vanity, brushing his short hair repeatedly. He shook his head in disbelief. Pete’s hair wasn’t long enough to necessitate as much effort as he was putting into to it – let alone a *vanity* to do it at.

Pete looked up from his work with a blank expression, “Huh?”

“The pink razor...” Harmon repeated, “Who’s is it?”

“It’s mine,” Pete scoffed, as if saying ‘duh!’

“It’s yours?” Harmon shook his head. Even though he was pretty sure that it was true, he was still having trouble believing *why* his roommate would have it.

“Yes,” Pete said in a matter-of-fact-tone, “It’s mine Harm. You know it *must* be. There’s only two of us, and your keen intellect has probably realized that it’s not not yours.”

There was a ‘snotty’ tone to his voice that Harmon found very annoying. More annoying than he normally found Pete’s voice. He shook his head again. *Try not to smack him*, a voice inside his head said.

“Okay... but *why* do *you* have a ladies’ razor Pete?”

Pete, who had returned to incessantly brushing his hair, looked back up at Harmon in the doorway with an irritated expression, “Really? Did you just ask me what you use a razor for?”

It was Harmon’s turn to be irritated. He contemplated reaching over and smacking his roommate for a moment, but instead decided on a decidedly gentler route, “I *know* what damn lady’s razor is *for*, you idiot, I just don’t know why there’s one in an apartment that’s occupied by two *guys!*”

Pete sighed and continued to brush his hair, *again*, and without looking up from his work said, “It’s mine Harm. Okay? Just leave it alone.”

Harmon was already turning to leave, “Oh... it would be my pleasure...” he muttered. The entire exchange had been pure frustration. Obviously Pete was intent on driving him nuts, and it was working *extremely* well.

In fact, very-nearly *everything* that Pete did drove Harmon nuts. From replacing the good ‘ol whole milk in the fridge in some kind of soy-based-non-dairy-skim-milk-replacement, to leaving his skimpy new underthings hanging in the bathroom (*skimpy new underthings?*), to clip-clopping around the apartment in one of his two-or-three pairs of wedge-heeled shoes, ‘practicing’ walking for work.

It was all driving Harmon crazy.

What was worse, though, was the fact that having gone so many months without work, Harmon found himself in a position where he couldn't even afford to look for a place of his own. Thus, he was stuck in Pete's apartment, with all of Pete's annoying habits... which were, by the way, getting more annoying by the minute.

Harmon was starting to feel a little desperate, but of course... he would *never* let his daffy roommate know.

*That would be humiliating.*



"I swear to God Ames," Pete lamented as he dressed for his shift, "My roommate is like, a *total* nut-job"

He had buckled up his straight-legged tight-fitting, skinny black pants, ramped, wedge heeled black shoes and requisite white collared short-sleeved shirt and was checking his hair – again – in the mirror.

Amy, the chief hostess, was doing the same – but more. She was checking her hair, red lipstick and eyebrow pencil as she nodded her head, "Yeah, it sounds like it."

"I mean... I get that he's all out of money and stuff," Pete continued, "But all he does anymore is sit around and check the paper for a stupid job that's never going to happen... oh, and complain about my shit. I swear – complain, complain, complain. It never stops! It's like, *don't pick on me because you can't find a job*, you know?"

"Totally," Amy nodded again. "You should get him an interview here Petes. We can *always* use another guy on desk." She turned and smiled at Pete, "Especially if you're going to move into the front house."

Pete turned to her and blushed, "You can?"

"Oh fer-sure Petes," Amy nodded with a gigantic grin.

Pete nodded. He was used to the girls at work calling him Petes instead of his usual Pete, or Peter. He liked having a nickname, it meant they accepted him as part of the group.

"And besides," the girl continued, "I think one of the other girls is leaving us soon so we'll be looking for someone to replace her, which means that *you* could be moved into the club to work the floor..."

"Oh wow," Pete smiled. He knew that working the floor as a server was where the big-money-tips were at.

“And if that happens,” Amy finished up, “We’ll need to find someone to move into your current position.”

Pete nodded as Amy finished her makeup and stood up from her chair smoothing her short red pleated skirt over her black tights and adjusting the collar on her white shirt...a white shirt identical to Pete’s. Her four-inch heels clicked on the floor as she turned from side to side, admiring her reflection in the mirror. Pete smiled up at her. She was very beautiful. *All* of the girls that worked here were. At times, as the only guy on the desk, Pete felt just a tad bit inadequate, what with his boring pants and drab shoes.

He sighed and wondered if he would ever be anything other than drab and boring, then went out to the host station to start his shift.



After that, Harmon didn’t see his roommate much for several days. He bumped into him occasionally in the kitchen, and when he asked him what he was up to in his room, Pete would cryptically reply: “Practicing.”

“Practicing for what?” Harmon would indignantly inquire, usually getting no explanation.

Finally, one day after tiring of Harmon’s questioning, Pete blasted him. “You know Harm,” he began, “Although you may think that the world is just going to one day *hand* you your perfect dream job, the *rest* of us have realized that you *actually* have to *work* at things in order to get anywhere in life, so while you’re sitting on the sofa, feeling sorry for yourself ‘cuz no-one’s invited you to the table, *I* am getting ready for something *better*. So *ex-cuse* me for living if you can’t wrap your primitive little brain around that!”

With that, he stomped his feet and clicked away from the kitchen.

Harmon paused for a moment, stunned at Pete’s outburst. He hadn’t been chewed out like that since he bumped into his ex at the supermarket. As he let the moment sink in, he was also letting his brain catch up to his ears.

Clicked?

He quietly tip-toed to the open doorway of his roommate’s room and poked his head around to see what it was that Pete was ‘practicing’ for. What he saw, made his jaw fall open.

Pete was seated neatly before his vanity, in his uniform white shirt, but instead of black pants, the young man was adorned in opaque black tights... under a short red pleated *skirt!* His long lean legs ended in a pair of four-and-a-half inch black platform pumps... *which explained the clicking, as opposed to the clapping his other wedge-heels made.* His face looked smooth and flawless, with his thin eyebrows neatly drawn in and a heavy dusting of deep rouge on each

cheek. He was mid-way through carefully applying a coating of slick red lipstick to his lips and had the look of someone *deep* in concentration on his face.

Harmon stood there for several moments, unable to understand why Pete was doing was he was doing. It had all started with that damned supper club. Ever since he had started working there, his roomie had turned into some kind of flamboyant... cross-dresser.



But how could that be?

Harmon scratched his head in disbelief. Surely they weren't *forcing* him to be like that. Harmon would have noticed that for sure. Pete, like every other red-blooded man on the planet, would have complained loud and long about being forced to dress like a girl at work.

Unless they had really threatened him. Maybe they blackmailed him.

Or maybe they were using some kind of freakish mind control to change his thought patterns and behaviors... like the Russians used to do. Harmon had read about the techniques those crafty Soviets had developed during the cold war. They turned captured Americans into Russian spies.

Once the USSR broke up, these evil geniuses and their unorthodox techniques vanished, never to be heard from again. The it's rumored that many of them emigrated to the USA.

Harmon shuddered at the thought of his poor dimwitted roommate being unknowingly brainwashed into thinking it was perfectly normal to dress like a girl... *or* worse, to actually *think* that he was.

Harm shook his head. He'd been watching too many movies.

No brilliant Russian was going to come to the U.S. to turn dimwitted unemployed marketing professionals into cross-dressing waiters – or waitresses, as it were.

No, he deduced, Pete must just *enjoy* to dress like a girl.

That *had* to be it.

A clip-clop sound in the hallway signified that Pete was moving out of the bedroom and into the living area.

"Hey," Harmon smiled as his skirted roommate entered the room, "So, off to work?"

Pete looked confused. It was highly unusual for Harmon to make small-talk.

"Um... *yah*," he said. The 'yeah' sounded more like 'duh'.

"How's that job going anyway?" Harmon asked.

"Good..." Pete replied in an uncertain tone, as if wondering... *why are you asking?*

"I see they've changed your uniform a little," Harm motioned at Pete's new feminine outfit.

"Yeah," Pete said, "They did."

There wasn't enough tone in his voice for Harmon to determine if he was pleased about it, or annoyed.

“It’s pretty...” he scratched his head trying to find the word, Pete’s eyes seemed to light up at the sound of the word ‘pretty’, “... pretty unconventional, you know – for a guy.”

Pete’s facial expression soured and he shot him an annoyed look, “What are you talking about? All the other hosts and servers dress like this.”

Harmon looked a little shocked, “*All* of them? Even the other guys?”

“Uh... hello?” Pete replied again in his new-found snotty tone, “I’m a guy... and *I’m* dressed like this. So *obviously* that’s what we’re all wearing.” He shook his head as if disgusted by the stupidity of Harmon’s question.

Harmon was shocked, “But... it’s a skirt, Pete”

Pete picked up a small black purse that hung on the hook where the coats belonged and put it over his shoulder, “Duh! No kidding Harm. Wow, you’re bright!”

Harmon was doubly dumbfounded, “But you’re a guy, Pete... and it’s a *skirt*, don’t you feel just a little... *odd*?” Harmon looked down at Pete’s heeled shoes, “And aren’t *those* odd too?”

Pete scrunched up his face, “No. Why?”

“Well... it’s just that they’re... a little un...” He wanted to say un-masculine, but given how Pete’s emotions seemed to be running high as of late... he decided a different tact, “Un... like anything you used to wear.”

“Well, they are a little un...” Pete replied, “expected, that’s for sure”

“Unexpected?”

“Yeah, this wedge heel took some getting used to... but I think I’ve got it now. You have to learn to change your whole posture and everything. You need to walk different, stand different, carry yourself different. It’s all different.

Harmon glanced down at his roomies ramped wedge heels shoes, “Yeah, you’re *different* all right.”

“Hey!” Pete clapped his hands excitedly as he changed the topic, “Speaking of different, why don’t you come for an interview at Sapphires. I know its outside of your comfort zone a little,” he paused for a moment as he watched Harmon’s face contort, “But it might just pay a few extra bills around here for you,” he smiled, “You know?”

Harmon shook his head, “There’s no way. You might enjoy acting like a fruit-loop for minimum wage plus tips... But there’s no freaking way you’ll catch me doing it.”

Pete wasn’t finished, “They said they’d give me a bonus if I refer someone and they get hired...” he smiled, “And I kinda thought we could split it. You know, ‘cuz were pals and roommates and everything.”

Harmon scrunched his face again, “Pals?”

Pete nodded, “Yeah... we’re pals... aren’t we?” He suddenly looked very worried. Like a kid that was about to learn the truth about the tooth fairy, or Santa Claus.

“Yeah,” Harmon said finally, “We’re pals... I just don’t think we’ve got the same goals when it comes to finding a career... okay?”

Pete sighed, “Oh... okay.”

He dragged his wedge heels as he headed towards the door.

Harmon just shook his head and rolled his eyes.

With that, the femininated boy, purse in hand, heels on foot, minced out the door, leaving a stunned Harmon on the couch staring at the space he had once occupied. *What an idiot...* Pete thought to himself. Harmon had a similar thought, shaking his head as his Pete left: *Moron*, he said to himself.



A frustrated looking Pete reported to the hostess station soon after his exchange with Harmon. Supervisor Amy could tell that something was up, and decided to take action. This was Pete’s first day in a skirt and heels, and she couldn’t afford to have him regress.

“How are things?” she asked in a friendly tone.

“Oh,” Pete said thoughtful, “They’re okay... it’s just...”

Amy gave a consoling glance, “just what?”

Pete took a deep breath, “My roommate was all, like... ’on’ me, you know? About my uniform... saying that I was a guy and stuff about wearing a skirt and things...”

“Oh dear,” Amy sighed, “You’ve had troubles with him before, haven’t you?”

Pete nodded, “We used to work together. It wasn’t pretty.”

Amy nodded back, looking confused, “So... why are you roommates?”

Pete shrugged, “It made sense at the time. We both got downsized at the same time, so...”

“Ahhh,” Amy acknowledged, “Well you’ve got nothing to worry about... you’re just following orders. We have a dress code here, and... well, the code is, you wear a dress, right?”

Pete nodded again, “It’s a skirt actually.”

Amy chuckled, “Yes, it *is* a skirt. And it’s great that you know the difference. That’s why we hired you Petes. You’re a fast learner.”

Pete blushed, “Thanks. I try.”

“Now if only your pesky roommate was as open to learning as you.”

Pete’s embarrassed look turned to surprise, “huh?”

“Your roommate,” Amy continued, “He sounds like a real cave-dweller. I bet your life is hell with such a nay-sayer around all the time”

Pete’s eyes lit up, “Oh, you have no idea. He’s so negative. Complaining all the time about me leaving my underwear hanging in the bathroom. I’m like... *hello... it’s silk!* He’s such a pain.”

Amy nodded and smiled, “I can only imagine.” She turned to the mirror at the back of the room and winked before turning back to Pete, “Now,” she continued, “Let me show you how to plump up those lips of yours.” She smiled as she sat Pete – who was also nodding and smiling – in front of the mirror.



Meanwhile, back at the apartment, a very sneaky Harmon had decided to find out more. He had already gone through his roommate’s dresser, now stocked with lacy panties and stockings, and had checked out his closet, equally emasculated with skirts and heeled shoes, and found nothing. That is to say that... aside from the obvious fact that a man’s closet and dresser were stocked with panties and heels... that was out of the ordinary.

Harmon wondered how he hadn’t noticed Pete changing so quickly. Sure, the girly, skinny jeans and wedge heels should have been a dead giveaway, but to go to full-blown skirts this fast? He shook his head. *How could it have happened?*

He kept digging. Maybe it was a cult. Maybe it was a gang. Maybe it was a mental breakdown. Harmon then spotted a DVD case on the counter. *Hmmmm*. He recalled Pete having mentioned a DVD that he had to watch when he first got hired. Maybe there were clues on there. He held up the case – ‘Sapphire Club’ it read on the surface, ‘Employment Guidelines and Training Instructional Video.’ Bingo!

He walked back out into the living room and slipped the DVD into the player, and sat back on the couch. *Surely* he would be smart enough to get to the bottom of this. He was, after all, *far* more intelligent than his roommate. The video began with a montage of images of the club and its servers... and true to Pete’s word, they were all dressed in flippy pleated skirts and platform heels... but none of them looked like guys.

But why would they? Who would want to see a video about a club full of guys?

Harmon was again confused. He sighed and laid back on the sofa again. He felt his eyes getting heavy as he watched the images flicker on the screen.

Much later that night, Pete returned from work to find Harmon, fast asleep, sitting on the couch, with the DVD instructional video that he had received



from the club playing on 'loop' on the TV. He shook his head, annoyed that his roommate had obviously violated his personal space to find the DVD. He picked up the remote, and turned the TV off.

Harmon fluttered his eyes, as if slowly coming back to life. He looked up at his roommate, skirted, and heeled and initially felt slightly disgusted. However after blinking his eyes a few more times, he started to feel okay with it.

*After all, he justified, the club had obviously asked him to do it, so what was the big problem?*

He shook his head, as if trying to shake that last thought out.

Pete just stared at him, “Are you drunk?” he finally asked.

Harmon shook his head, “No I... I just...” he struggled to find the words. He wanted to complain, but his tongue kept tripping up. *What the hell is wrong with me?* He wondered to himself, “I’m just tired,” he finally blurted out, picking himself up off the sofa and heading to his room, “I better just go to bed.”

With that, a disheveled looking Harmon headed off to his bedroom, leaving Pete to shake his head.

*He really is a cave dweller,* Pete thought to himself as he headed to his own room.



The next day Harmon was shuffling in his seat when his roommate entered the room and immediately noticed his erratic behavior.

“What’s gotten into you?” he asked his roomie as he straightened his skirt.

Harmon glanced over at Pete and shuddered. He knew that he was a guy and a guy shouldn’t wear a skirt. But... yet... it looked okay on him. In fact... it looked good.

“Ugh!” Harmon exclaimed as he shook his head feverishly, “I don’t know what’s getting into me. I feel like I’ve having some kind of nervous breakdown.”

Pete’s expression became worried, “Really?”

“My...” he shuffled again, “My skin feels itchy, and my head is spinning... and I can’t get comfortable... it’s...”

Pete encouraged him to finish his sentence, “...it’s?”

Harmon sighed, “I just can’t explain it.”

Pete smiled warmly, “Well I think that you should try Harm, I mean... I have to admit that you’re acting a little crazy.”

Harmon rubbed his head. He heard what his roommate was saying, yet... it made no sense. How could *he*... who was wearing a skirt, think that *he* who wasn’t, was acting crazy.

“Well...” he paused, “If I’m crazy... than how do you explain what’s going on with you?”

Pete looked aghast, “What does that mean?”

“Dude,” Harmon replied, “You’re wearing an F-ing skirt and heels!”