

J O E S I X P A C K

**TWO
FORMS
OF ID**

A Web Classics Revisited Story

2007 Paperback Edition

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Chapter 1: Is it Too Much To Ask?

It was so hot, you could have fried an egg on it. His forehead, that is.

Over in the corner of a dim office, a woman was punching furiously at her multiplexed office phone, hunting and picking for the right convenient preset to turn off that damn hold music. How had she turned it on in the first place? She was just trying for an outside line.

Her claw-like nails clacked and scraped on the flimsy plastic buttons, as she fruitlessly kept pushing and poking at random. The woman, who kept poking buttons with the persistence of a woodpecker, was somewhere in her mid-thirties. But she looked much older. She was not particularly attractive, being skinny and looking frazzled. Her stringy brown hair was her most recognizable quality.

The air above Harvey Angler's head was – if you looked closely – rippling with heat. That's how hot his forehead was. It wasn't because of the season, or because of the poor air conditioning in the cramped office, it was something on his mind. He was stewing over his incredible situation he now found himself in.

By the way, this is also something that you could have cooked on his forehead: stew.

The crackling sound of the muzak version of “Summer Breeze” piping loudly out of the phone's tinny speaker finally caused Harvey to momentarily ignore his problems and drop his guard. He took his fist and slammed it down on the phone like a hammer, causing the handset and base to bounce onto the floor. But at least the music stopped.

So he felt a momentary wisp of relief in this otherwise hellish day.

“You’re trying to get us caught, aren’t you?” The woman said, under her breath, hissing at him.

With those words, Harvey’s dark mood returned, twice as intense as before. But you see, it wasn’t really Harvey’s fault at all. It was his situation.

“Hello, Jean.” A stout man with horrible skin said. He had appeared out of nowhere. “Not having problems with the phone, are you?”

The woman gathered up the loose phone parts and clumsily dumped them on her desk. “No! No. No.” Jean Angler said. “My daughter is just a bit clumsy, you know.” She shot a look of anger at Harvey.

“Oh, so is this your daughter, Jean?” The lump of a man said.

“You haven’t met yet?” Jean straightened up in her chair to do the introductions. “Richard, this is my daughter. Honey, say hello to Mr. Rollins, the office manager.” Richard stuck out his hand and smiled broadly. Harvey got up and politely shook it.

“What’s your name, sweetie?” Richard said.

Harvey swallowed a truckload of pride, steadied himself and answered: “Christina.” He delicately cleared his throat and concentrated on sounding more effeminate. It was actually pretty eerie. He had the voice dead on. “My name’s Christina.” Harvey smiled through his anger and revulsion.

“Well, be careful with that phone, Christina. They’re not cheap.” Richard then turned to Jean with a smile. “What is it with girls and phones?” He laughed to himself at his own keen observation.

“Ha-ha!” Jean replied, trying to pretend it was funny. “Oh, yes. Kids. What’re you gonna do?” She smiled back in the empty, hollow way you do with tepid office humor, as she prayed this conversation would end as soon as possible.

“Who knows!?” Richard turned around halfway, preparing to leave the scene. “I don’t!” He continued to chuckle as he proceeded on his way. “Good to meet you Christina.” He added as he left.

“Yeah.” Harvey muttered. “Nice to meet you.” He plopped back down onto his butt and started to rebuild the momentum in his snowballing anger.

“Will you just take it easy, Harvey?” Jean hissed.

Harvey bounced up in his seat to tug the backside of his dress under him. As he did, strands from his long wig of mousy brown hair flew along his shoulders, held in place by a pink hair band. He continued to fool with his little-house-on-the-prairie dress and its stupid doily collars until he couldn’t bear to touch it anymore. A faint sizzling sound could be heard coming from his ears as his brain broiled in its own juices.

Jean’s face showed fear. “I need you to get yourself under control, Harvey. Don’t make me lose my job! We still have five hours to go.” She gently kicked him in the ankle, leaving a scuff on his white stockings.

Harvey’s mind started to misfire and sputter. He was barely getting through this as it was, and it was getting worse and worse by the millisecond. To keep himself from going mad – if he wasn’t way beyond that already – he reviewed the events that led up to this nightmare in the hope that he could now spot the exact moment where it all went wrong.



It was three weeks ago when he had first heard of Jean's problems at work. She was harping and whining on the subject incessantly. She was going to lose her job, no one liked her, no one respected her, the work was too hard, the air conditioning didn't work, blah, blah, blah.

Jean was Harvey's older sister. Much older. She was twelve years his senior, physically – but years behind in emotional maturity. It seemed to Harvey that she might never settle down and learn to take life easy.

His sister was the sort of person who should have never been entrusted with the responsibilities of a job, or even the responsibilities of dressing herself. She was a twenty-four hour a day basket case, a bundle of jittery, spazmatic nerves. One day, she would surely explode in a tangled mess of anxiety and paranoia.

But until that day, she was Harvey's own personal demon. He lived with Jean, in the house he had grown up in, as his parents moved away when they retired. For his part, Harvey had grown up the neglected one in his nuclear family, being too well adjusted to warrant the sort of attention his frazzled parents paid to the trouble-ridden Jean. But his parents had burnt out long ago. So now the problem had been dropped into his lap. He could deal with it well enough, as his resistance had been built up for many years. And he could tolerate her quirky, draining personality without too much strain on his life.

That was until Jean started in on her new job. How she got it, Harvey had no clue. And even though he was happy for her, he now had a whole new level of Jean's insecurity to cope with. Her complaints and worries about work were

always the same, and became like a mantra as she chanted and recited them at every opportunity. Harvey tried hard to console her, but he had run out of answers. He was reduced to pleading for sanity and calmness, only to be rewarded with Jean's list of problems once again. He begged her to stop. But it wasn't long before he found himself holding her when she started to cry. He promised her everything would be okay. And he promised her that he would "Do anything on Earth to help."

What would it take to calm her down? Harvey resolved to help her fit in at work. Yes, it was really going far above and beyond the call than anybody should have had to do on behalf of another grown adult, but she was his sister. He had to help her adjust.

He set to work on rebuilding his sister in the mold of a driven, professional businesswoman. Harvey was by trade an electrician, but his flexible schedule allowed him a lot of free time. It was needed. He chose Jean's outfits, drilled her on using business jargon and even wound up spending his nights finishing most of the work she was supposed to be doing. It paid off slowly – ever so slowly – in good performance reviews, compliments and even a raise. For the first time in a long time, Jean was settling in and calming down. And Harvey could relax.

For a minute or two. No sooner had the paranoia about her abilities left her when new worries burrowed into her head. She was obsessed with her inability to bond or socialize with coworkers. They were all mothers and fathers, raising families and talking about the tests and travails of being parents.

So here it was, April 25. Bring Your Daughter To Work Day. And here Harvey was, dressed as a young girl, pre-

tending to be Jean's daughter. This, despite the fact that he was twenty-four years old and holding an M.B.A. Why?

When Jean had first mentioned it, he couldn't even believe that she'd ever suggest such a thing. Pretend to be a girl to help Jean's social standing at work? Was she insane, or just oblivious to reality?

Neither. She did know one thing about her brother. He liked to dress.

He didn't do it often, but he never turned down the opportunity. Halloween, costume parties, Mardi Gras. Whatever excuse he could find, he was in a dress and on the town. Not that he was a habitual cross dresser. Harvey never felt any overpowering need to dress, nor was he sexually aroused by it. He just thought it was a kick.

Harvey may have been twenty-three years old, but he was in that small percentile of men who were fully gowned at under 5'6". And he was very young looking. On a good day he could be mistaken for a college freshman, what with his beard never really growing in. So by pure accident, he discovered he had a useless talent he never before suspected a man could have. He could be a girl. A teenager, to be specific.

David Ibsen, a longtime friend of Harvey's was the first to spot it. He'd tease Harvey from time to time about his size and androgynous appearance, but never think twice about it. But a drunken bet made by David and his friends resulted in Harvey making himself up to be a teenage girl for a day. The bet was to see if he could be passed off in disguise for twenty four hours. Harvey collected some easy cash. He was unnervingly convincing as a girl. No beauty queen, mind you – more like a portly chess-club-loser type of girl – but the disguise was credible. Needless to say,

Harvey's friends were visibly uncomfortable and disturbed with his newfound skill. But Harvey liked the power of making his friends so obviously uneasy. That was the fun part about dressing up. There was no thrill from wearing womens' clothes, he just simply liked freaking people out. And he was quite good at it.

So it was armed with this knowledge that Jean had made her suggestion. Harvey would come to work in a dress and pretend to be Jean's nonexistent daughter, Christina. Jean had already bought the dress, the wig and the shoes. All Harvey had to do was put on his little-girl act and hang out all day at her office. This wasn't any big problem, was it? He did say he would "Do anything on Earth to help," didn't he?

Harvey was aghast. He hadn't suspected that his sister was so off the deep end. It was unbelievable. Jean apologized, and retracted her idea. He was right. It was silly and dumb. Then she just waited for the inevitable.

Two days later, when Harvey suck into Jean's room and opened a drawer of Jean's dresser, he found a note under the dress he wanted to try on. It read "Gotcha!"



"Harvey." Snap snap. "Harvey!" Jean snapped her fingers in front of his face again. Harvey broke from his shoe gazing to focus his glare on his sister. "The sandwich cart is coming by. Do you want a snack?" Jean asked.

Harvey said nothing, intensifying his glare.

"You hate me. You're going to hate me forever, aren't you?" Jean whined. Harvey clenched his jaw and sneered.

The cart wheeled on by, unmolested by the self-involved siblings.

“Hey!” Harvey yelled to the sandwich guy before he got to the elevator. “Do you have tuna?” He sprinted to stop the closing doors. “Tunafish?” He repeated. The man handed one over, and Harvey thanked him.

When he got back to Jean’s desk, she was pretending to concentrate on paperwork. “I knew you couldn’t stay angry all day. See? I told you you’d get used to it.”

Harvey talked with a full mouth. “I’m hungry, okay?”

“Whatever you say, sweetie.” Jean replied. “Who can understand teenagers, anyway?”

A large, balding gentleman with thick glasses stopped at Jean’s desk. He smiled and nodded a silent greeting at Harvey. “Oh! Is this your sister Jean?,” he said with sarcasm.

Jean’s head snapped up with alarm. It was her boss, Mr. Pickwick. “My sister!?” Jean said, with the typical sense of panic she infused into her speech.

“I was kidding, Jean.” Mr. Pickwick said.

“What?” Jean replied in distress. “What do you mean?”

Harvey stepped in to save her. “He was joking, *Mom*. Relax. *Mom*.”

Jean’s worried eyes darted back and forth between the two people. She was sure that this was going to get her fired. Right now. This instant. She’d be alone. On the streets. Lying in some dark alleyway. And then she finally caught on. “Oh. Sorry. Busy day.” She said. Harvey rolled his eyes. “And what’s your name, little lady?” Mr. Pickwick asked.

A small bit of tuna caught in Harvey’s throat. He tried to make his coughing sound as effeminate as possible.

“You all right?” Mr. Pickwick asked out of courtesy.

"I'm fine." Harvey said with a smile. He was going to have to pour on the charm. If he made a good impression here, it would certainly speak favorably of Jean to have raised such a delightful young daughter. "Thank you for asking." He tilted his head to the side and put on his cheesiest aw-shucks little girl big-toothed smile. "I'm Christina."

Mr. Pickwick held out his hand to shake, and Harvey grasped it lightly and limply. "I'm very pleased to meet you, Christina. Your mother speaks very highly of you. Can't stop talking about you."

"Really?" He replied to Pickwick. Harvey twisted his head slightly to peer at Jean. She blocked his stare with a manilla folder. "How nice of her." He said, bitterly. For a moment, Harvey almost dropped the act. Then he recovered. "She's just the greatest Mom in the whole world!" He said through his clasped teeth.

"How old are you Christina?" Mr. Pickwick asked for no apparent reason.

Harvey brought himself back to the task at hand. "I'm almost eigh..."

"Fifteen!" Jean interrupted.

Harvey's head darted back at Jean. He so wanted to bean her. But this was no time to crack. He was here for one reason: to leave a good impression. "I'll be sixteen in three mon..."

"Seven months!" Jean interrupted again. Harvey was wondering just how much of this story Jean had worked out in advance. Much more than she had let on previously, it seemed.

"Isn't that like kids? Always trying to be a little older. And they grow up so fast." Mr. Pickwick smiled at Jean. She

missed her cue to say something like “Before you know it, they’re all grown up,” or some other parental cliché.

“Fifteen, hmm?” Mr. Pickwick looked at Harvey with a critical eye. “You seem awfully mature to be only fifteen, Christina.”

Harvey coughed again, involuntarily. What did this guy know?

“Yes sir. Very poised for only fifteen.” Pickwick said, obviously contemplating something. “Jean...” He asked.

“Yes,” Jean’s overanxious voice responded, “Mr. Pickwick?”

Pickwick paused as he thought deeper. And paused. And paused.

Harvey decided he needed to bail out. Now. If he came clean, maybe they could just claim that this was a sort of practical joke. Ha. Ha. Everyone would have a good laugh. Maybe some stories to tell. Maybe some people would get fired and dragged out by security. Whatever the cost, it was now done and over. He reached for the seam of his wig to pull it off.

Mr. Pickwick finally finished his thought. “Has Christina ever done any modeling or acting?” He asked Jean, turning his attention away from Harvey.

Harvey discreetly pulled the wig back onto his head.

Jean looked as nervous as she had all day. And that was saying something. “Acting? What do you mean some kind of acting job, or was she an actress or or...” She went into the first stages of hyperventilation.

‘Boy, she’s good in a crunch,’ Harvey thought. He had little choice, so he stepped into the fray. “No. No. I’ve never done anything like that, Mr. Pickwick.”

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“Would you like to try?” Mr. Pickwick asked. “You’re very tall for a fifteen year old, which is what people look for in a model. And you’re so well poised, I think you’d make a great actress.”

“She’d love to!” Jean suddenly shouted.

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Chapter 2:
A Step or Two in the Wrong Direction

“What?” Jean said.

“You *know* what.” Harvey said with the greatest degree of gravity. He was at home now, so he no longer had to pretend. He no longer had to hold back.

Jean’s worried eyes looked at Harvey in despair. “I knew it. You hate me.”

“I don’t hate you, Sis. I just sometimes...” Harvey searched for the right words. “I sometimes don’t know what you’re thinking.”

“You hate me!” Jean wailed.

“I just said I don’t hate you Jean!” Harvey barked. He quickly got a hold of his emotions. It was a big mistake to yell at his fragile sister. She would always take it too hard and emotionally curl up into a ball for days. “Let’s just back track a little here, okay?”

“You hate me.” Jean repeated.

Harvey rubbed the temples of his head. “You were perfectly aware that I was pretending to be your daughter just for the day, and just to help you out, right?”

Jean nodded.

“And I was really uncomfortable doing this.”

Jean nodded again.

Harvey once more collected his thoughts and tried to frame his speech in the least threatening way. “So... why then, would you volunteer me... for a commercial... where I would have to go though even more... potential embarrassment... and discomfort?” Once finished, he awaited the response from Jean, knowing perfectly well he wasn’t going to hear anything he wanted to.

He felt the same, dreadful feeling he had spent years growing up with. Jean was taking over his life.

When he was younger, all he ever wanted to do was get out of this house. He just wanted to have a real life of his own. But Jean was so needy. She had to be constantly watched. The demands were incredible. And now, here he was, a grown man who's life was being taken over by having to look after his sister.

Jean pleaded. "You don't understand, Harvey." Harvey wholeheartedly agreed with that observation. "Mr. Pickwick's been having a tough time casting that spot for the commercial."

"I don't really care about that Jean..." Harvey tried to say.

"No! You... You see..." Jean's nerves started to kick in. "If I could get Christina into the auditions, Mr. Pickwick would love me for it! I might get a raise, a promotion..."

"There is no Christina, Jean." Harvey wanted to make this clear. "She doesn't exist."

"But..." Jean protested.

"She doesn't exist." Harvey said again.

"Glaucoma. He's got badeyes. Itwillonlybe fora minute-ortwo!" Jean's speech was sped up in fear of not getting it all out. "Youjusthaveto goandshowup thenyougettoleave! See? See!? Youdontunderstand! *Youneverlistentomeandy-ouneverunderstand!!*"

Harvey reached inside his shirt pocket and picked a B-12 vitamin from it. He was going to need the strength. He swallowed it down with an audible 'gulp' sound. "Slow down. And try that again." He said, resuming his temple massage.

"Mr. Pickwick is nearly blind. He's got glaucoma. He can't see."

Harvey waited for the relevant part.

Jean concentrated, knowing this was her only chance she was going to get. "He never even saw you. He thinks you really are some cute fifteen year old girl." Jean saw that she had grabbed a sliver of Harvey's attention. "You go to the audition, the director gets one good look at you, and we go home."

Unbelievably, now that he had heard the explanation, he saw it's twisted, cruel logic.

"I can't do that again, Jean." Harvey felt the need to say it out loud, just to save face.

"Please, Harvey." Jean asked.

It was going to be just a few minutes. A few minutes out of the rest of his life. He could manage it. He could get his sister the promotion, the raise and the respect of her co-workers. He had to try. Against ninety-nine point nine percent of his better judgment, he had to agree. Which is why he found himself on his way to the audition the very next morning.



"You said it was going to be quick."

Jean barely even heard him. "Shush! We've only got a few minutes!" She then rammed a tube of lipstick into Harvey's lips. "Pucker like a fish."

Harvey grabbed Jean's arm and tore it away from his face. "Just give me a moment, all right?"

Jean almost opened her mouth to speak, but it quickly dawned on her that it was one of those instances where she had better do what Harvey said. She walked away without another word.

When he was a kid, Harvey would have killed to be in this spot. He had always been overshadowed by Jean and her needs. His parents rarely even noticed his difficulties with life. He had spent many night as a kid dreaming of the opportunity to go out in the world and make a name for himself.

He desperately wanted to become famous. Not that he ever really told anyone that. He was just a small-town kid with no real hopes of going anywhere. And he knew it. But still, in the back of his mind, he knew that fame was the only way he'd ever be able to show his family how special he was. But now, he was trapped in a lie, as if life were turning his dreams back on him and laughing. What did they call it? Irony?

Such a polite word for such a horrible feeling.

Harvey spun around on his stool to look at himself in the mirror. He had on his wig, the hair band, and a new dress from the costuming people. He did look like a young girl, he knew that well enough. But he had always thought he was kind of a dog – as a girl. His face was kind of chubby, his legs were thick, he had squinty eyes and thin lips. Sure, he could pass as an ugly eighteen year old, but as a cute fifteen year old girl? Mr. Pickwick must have been as blind as a bat.

Across the sound stage, the director huddled with his production assistant. “They’re all drama queens, Shana. Damn stage mothers.” He sucked on a cigarette. “I can’t use any of them. Is there anybody left on the list?”

Shana, a heavily made up woman of elusive but advanced age, checked her list. “Three more.” She stopped on one name. “And this Christina Angler girl. She’s the one Pickwick suggested, Luke.”

Luke the director peered over the tops of his sunglasses. "That's all?"

"That's the lot," said Shana.

Luke turned his head and eyes to the sky and waited for divine inspiration. None came. "Okay. Here's what we do. If none of these other girls pan out, we just cast the one Pickwick wants."

Shana was suspicious. "Are you serious? Did you see her?"

"I know. Arf. Escapee from the dog pound. But Pickwick writes the checks for this God-awful commercial shoot." Luke pushed his glasses back onto his face. "And you can't go wrong casting the bosses' favorite, now can you? Let's just get this done and get the hell out of this town."

"Amen." Shana agreed. She turned to the remaining actresses. "Let's have the next one!"

Back with Harvey, Jean was licking her thumb and using it to scrub something invisible off Harvey's face. "Stop fussing!" She said.

"Stop rubbing your spit on me then." Harvey cracked.

Jean disregarded his request. "It'll just be a few minutes. You're the last one they'll look at. They've probably already made their choice by now."

"Good." Harvey said. "Just let me get out of this meat market! They want me just for my body!"

Jean played with Harvey's bangs.

"That was a joke." Harvey said.

"What was?" Jean replied. "Look, honey, just memorize the line, okay?"

"Pickwick picks the perfect peaches?" Harvey asked.

Jean nodded. "That's the one."



“Pickwick picks the perfect peaches!” The cute girl on the TV said. She took a big bite. “Mmmmmm! Peachy!” she further added.

“Dude, I can’t believe that’s you.” The guy sitting next to Harvey said.

Harvey couldn’t even look. His head was between his legs, sitting bent over on the sofa. It was the perfect position for a crash landing in an airplane, but it was only his life that was out of control.

Jean came into the living room with a bowl full of Bugles. “Did I miss it? I missed it!” Jean whined. “Did I miss it, David?”

David Ibsen, a good friend of Harvey’s, was sitting on the couch next to the distended man. “Yeah. I told you not to leave.”

“Jean?” Harvey asked from between his knees, “Why is David here?”

“Don’t mind him David, he’s just a little cranky.” Jean said, dismissing her brother.

Harvey’s upper half sprang up as if here a resurrected corpse. “Just a little!”

“Maybe you can reassure him that it’s not the end of the world if he helped out his sister and filmed a TV commercial.” Jean popped a crisp in her mouth. “And made thirty thousand dollars I might add.”

“I’m not complaining about the money, Jean.” Harvey said softly. “It’s the whole face-on-national-television-as-a-girl thing that’s got me kind of...” Harvey’s tone changed. “*Cranky!*”

“I didn’t know it was going to be a national ad, Harvey.” Jean said innocently. Harvey’s eyes would have burnt a hole through Jean’s head if humans had such powers.

David nudged his friend with his elbow. “I wouldn’t worry about it, man. That girl looks nothing like you.” Harvey looked at his friend suspiciously. David was watching the show. “She’s cute.”

Harvey was sure that was an unintended insult in some weird way, but he let it go. “They used computers or something.” Harvey muttered.

“No shit?” David said. “Wow. They can sure do miracles with computers.”

“They didn’t do that much. Just a good make-up job.” Jean interjected. “Good lighting.”

Harvey scanned the area for blunt objects he could club Jean with. None. He went back to an earlier question. “Why is David here?”

“David is here to take a look at the contract we signed.”

“We?”

“I signed. Minors can’t sign a contract.” Jean corrected. “David, did you read it?”

“What?” David replied, distracted with the TV show again. “Oh yeah. The contract.” David was a skinny man, about twenty-eight or something and had graduated from drinking buddy to good friends with Harvey some years ago. His hippie looks, complete with scraggly beard and sandals belied his true occupation. He was a lawyer.

David plucked the contract in question from between his butt and the couch cushion, where he had been keeping it. “It’s all on the up-and-up. It’s got no tricks or anything in it. It’s pretty fair.”

“It depends on how you look at that.” Harvey grumbled.

Jean was intent on pursuing her line of questioning. “So, what if they want to do more commercials?” Harvey’s head snapped to attention and gave her such a look.

“Well,” David said, pausing to sip his beer. “It’s a standard commercial contract. The producers of the spot – Pickwick Packing & Canning – have an option to make what’s known as a ‘callback’ where they can have Harvey come back to film another spot, but at twice the previous rate.”

“Come back?” Harvey said.

“Twice the rate?” Jean said.

“Twice the rate? Sixty thousand dollars?” Harvey computed.

Jean’s face lit up. “Sixty thousand!”

Harvey’s brief moment of happiness vanished when he saw the look on Jean’s face. It was a look of delight mixed with fear. “You know something, Jean.”

Jean’s face turned a deep red. “I got a call this morning when you were in the shower.”

Harvey didn’t need to hear any more. For the first time in his life, he ground his teeth. “David.” He turned to face his friend. “What happens if I don’t want to do another commercial?”

“Then you have a buy-out clause. You refund a certain amount of money and you break the terms of the contract.” David continued. “In this case, it’s five thousand dollars.”

“Shit.” Harvey cursed. “They’re vultures!”

“Hey, don’t sweat it, man.” David said. “I wouldn’t let anything happen to my pal.” He smiled wickedly and whispered. “Don’t let this get around, but I think of you as the kid sister I never had.”

“Shove it, fuckface,” Harvey growled. He looked at his hands as if they had an answer. “Five thousand.” He came to a decision. “Fine. I’ll do that.”

“Harvey!” Jean snapped. “Sixty thousand!”

“Forget it.” Harvey stated. “This ends now.”

“Nope.” David said, his face still pointed at the television. “Fraud not.”

Harvey grabbed a handful of his vitamins, slapped them into his mouth and chased it with some beer. “What?” He asked.

“To enact the buy-out clause, the parent and/or guardian of Christina Angler must make an affidavit as to Christina’s status.” David finally broke his attention from the set. “You know, like why ‘Christina’ is unable to fulfill the terms of the contract. But if Jean makes this statement – and presumably makes up a story – she could be sued for fraud. And you for identity fraud. And even if she tells the truth, it’s still fraud, and everyone goes to jail. Even me, now that I know.”

Harvey’s world suddenly became way more claustrophobic. “You’re telling me there’s no way out?”

“Nope.” David said simply. “If they want you, they can have you.”

Harvey turned to look at Jean again, and she already knew the question.

“They want you.”

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Chapter 3: The Van

It was a long year for Harvey. That first callback wasn't so bad, but the second callback was too much. The third was impossible and the fourth and fifth had sort of been a blur to him. It was a very, very long year. But there were good things in his life, though. Jean had been promoted three times. She was still a basket case, but the higher up you move in a company, the more eccentric you can be. The higher she moved up, the better Jean fit in at work. At times, she almost seemed happy.

That didn't last very long, however. When tax time came, the IRS became suspicious of the money that had flowed into Jean Angler's accounts on behalf of the minor "Christina Angler." After all, you can't hide \$380,000 very easily. With that kind of money, Harvey had thought he was set for at least a few years, and he quit his electrician job.

But then the walls came crashing in. When they filed taxes, they had too much money to hide. The IRS demanded that the money go into a trust fund that only "Christina" would be able to access at age eighteen.

By that point, though, Harvey had already blown \$32,000 on a new car, and another \$20,000 down payment on a new condo. Which left him in the position of owing himself \$52,000

The money he had earned was essentially in an account that could never be touched. Not as long as reality continued to insist that there was no such person as Christina Angler to withdraw the money.

This left Harvey in deep debt, so much so that he had to find a way to pay it off, desperately. No job for an electri-

cian could pay enough to do it. Three years of jobs as an electrician couldn't do it. There was only one way to earn big money fast. It was back to work for Christina. This time, with David's help, they could craft a way for the money to go to Harvey's account, and keep him from going bankrupt.

Thus, the presence of Harvey Angler started to become more and more rare. More often than not, you could find him trying to squeeze himself into young ladies' jeans and practicing around the house in high-heeled shoes.

Often times, he'd even remain in his outfit long after he'd gone to an audition. Not because he was particularly fond of dressing this way, but because he was a little lazy.

Still, that was the easy part. The hard part was getting ready. On this particular morning, Harvey gripped the towel rack with his free hand as Jean grasped the wax on Harvey's forearm. And she pulled. Harvey cursed and swore as the ripping tore the hair from his body. His swearing reverberated on the tiles in his small bathroom. "Not fun." He growled, as he rubbed the arm with a towel. "Crybaby." Jean joked. A patented Harvey dead-eye stare told her it was not the time for humor. "Is that everything? Arms, legs, chest..."

Harvey was very sure that was everything.

"Eyebrows!" Jean remembered.

"Fuck." Harvey said. He dropped his shoulders and walked over to the chair in front of the sink. He sat, and awaited the next round of humiliation. His objections were minor, however, compared to the stink he had put up a year ago.

Because there had been a change. He was no longer pretending to be Christina to help his sister. He was doing it

now to keep himself from spending the next ten years in prison. If he couldn't come up with the missing money, he was done for.

"How much do you think?" Harvey said, pulling his brow around to visualize it.

"Not too much. Younger girls have thicker eyebrows, normally." Jean said.

Harvey wasn't sure. "Really?"

"I'm sure. They get thinner when they get tweezed over a lifetime."

"Let's get going, then." Harvey gripped the counter to prepare for the oncoming rush of pain.

After that, the hair would get colored, the skin exfoliated, and the nails lengthened. Jean would cut his now chin-length hair and mix up a tooth whitening treatment. And Harvey sat still for all of it.

This wasn't the first time he had done this. It was now a part of his weekly routine. Every Sunday was his "day of beauty." He had been through the routine half a dozen times now. He had to keep himself looking as good as possible, because this was now his full-time job. He was an actress slash model.

Running a circuit of talent agents, production houses and theater auditions, Harvey had become a local showbiz mainstay. Well, Christina Angler was how he was known around town, not as Harvey. He'd visit the crowded, cheap offices of theater professionals and sit in his seat while Jean filled out forms, and waited patiently to do his bit for a scout, casting director or just the chance to drop off his demo DVD.

Jean would drive him from audition to audition, trying get work with a growing sense of desperation. But since he

was well-recognized from his commercials, few wanted to cast the “peach girl” in another commercial. The same went for TV shows. Especially after meeting Harvey in person, and seeing how much help make-up and computer wizardry had done for Harvey’s career.

What remained for him were the leftovers.



As Jean parked the car in the lot, he turned to her brother. “You ready?”

Harvey checked himself in the rear view mirror. He took a deep breath. And let it go. “Yeah.” He whispered.

Mostly – though not entirely – for show, Jean held Harvey’s hand as she led him into the building. It was an old creaky why-isn’t-it-demolished-yet palace located in the forgotten part of the theater district. Inside, they were assembling the finalists for a children’s anti-drug performing troupe called “The Yes! to Life Gang.” They traveled the country, going from school to school giving ‘uplifting and inspiring’ motivation to a bunch of disinterested kids. It was hideous and sickening, but it was work. And it paid very well. It would singularly erase his \$52,000 debt.

Harvey reflected on the moment, realizing that his childhood dreams of fame were now so staggeringly perverse that it would take years of intense therapy to undo the damage. He’d have to just get used to the idea that this was his course in life for the immediate future. God help him if he should think too much about it, because he’d go insane in an instant.

Jean and Harvey shuffled into the theater, and found seats alongside the kids and mothers packing the first few rows.

One by one, the kids got up on stage and did a little song and dance number and then thanked “everybody” for “such a wonderful, fabulous time!” Gosh!

Harvey got up and did his bit. He did a little singing, a quick tap routine, a scene from Shakespeare and then thanked everybody and returned to his seat directly. Overall, his nervous voice was kind of deeper than he normally was able to keep it, and he wasn’t so good on his feet. And he was certainly the least enthusiastic ‘kid’ on stage. Honestly, he was ready to get out of here and go to the next audition halfway into his act.

So when he piled into the “Yes! to Life” van nine days later, along with the rest of the troupe for the four-month national tour, he was still a little confused. How had he gotten the job? Maybe he’d never know.

Jean had been there, and was actually crying for him as he was set to leave. She had hugged him like a mother would have, seeing her baby off on a long trip. It made Harvey feel extremely uncomfortable, but every real mother and father was doing the same with their kids as they bid farewell. So he kept up appearances.

He had to do some things he wasn’t proud of to get ready for the long trip. He couldn’t get away with growing a beard, so he had undergone some intense, day-long sessions of electrolysis to take care of what chin whiskers he had and his sideburns. He had been watching MTV for the whole week before the trip, so he’d at least have a clue as to what all the kids would be talking about.

For the last eight days, he had been talking at the highest possible pitch for all of his speech. He needed to make it a habit. And most embarrassing to him, he had to work on a new, imperceptible method to ‘conceal’ the family jewels.

It took a lot of attempts, a lot of duct tape, and a lot of pubic hair pulled out by the root. But eventually he had something close to undetectable.

Harvey had packed all of his three or four “girl” outfits he had, along with a hastily assembled array of grooming items & cosmetics. Jean had given him a few things as well, like a bag full of his vitamins and a portable video game. It was going to be a long four months, and he would be spending it with a van full of kids who were just about half his age. Harvey kept reminding himself that this would take care of his money problems. It would be all right soon.

The money would be sent to Jean, and she’d take care of the debts. All he had to do was survive. No matter how insipid the “Yes! to Life” message was, no matter how lame the show was going to be, no matter how vacuous the kids were, no matter how many times he’d have to sleep in this cramped van – he just had to survive. 120 days. That was all it was going to take. He was a grown man, after all. He could tough it out.

“Here we go, kids!” The troupe director said, grasping the handle to the van door. “We’re going to have a fun-tactular time!”

A slight sense of panic and a definite sense of dread took hold of Harvey as the door of the van slid shut. It clacked and locked, leaving him in total darkness with five little kids he had never met and thousands of lonely miles on the road were ahead of him.



When the door finally slid open for the last time four months later, Harvey had grown used to the metal door's rumbling, rolling noise, and used to the feeling he was being freed from a cave. He stumbled out and stretched out into the cool air of spring, blinking his eyes to get used to the sunlight.

"Christina!" a blonde girl with a bright smile called.

"Amber!" Harvey spun around and hugged her tight. "You've got my phone number, right?"

"Christina!" a black girl joined in the hug. And an Asian girl joined in as well.

They broke after a long minute and then Harvey approached the two boys in the troupe and gave them each a peck on the cheek. "I had a *super* time!" He said.

A chorus of goodbyes and sad farewells lingered forever before the group finally broke up and went their separate ways. Harvey scanned the parking lot and found Jean. He sprinted across the lot with his bags in tow and embraced Jean as if she were a lost teddy bear. "I missed you *so* much!" Harvey said.

Jean was a little startled to greet this chipper, upbeat version of her brother. This wasn't the person she had dropped off here months ago. This person had changed. But Jean wasn't totally surprised. She had clues. Harvey would write every so often, and make the occasional phone calls. Jean realized over the course of several letters that a slow change had come over Harvey. After all, you can't spend four months on the road with five teenage kids and not try to build up a resistance to the energy and vitality of youth – because if you didn't, you might just find yourself giving in to it. And it was clear he had failed miserably to build any resistance.

Harvey leapt into the back seat of Jean's car, and started rifling through his bags. "I got you something!" he said. "Look!"

Harvey produced a snow globe with the script 'From beautiful snowy Utah!' written on the base. "I thought that might keep you thinking cool at work. Even though it's only March. Well, summer's only three months away! You can use it then. Do you like it? Isn't it cool?"

Jean wasn't used to not being able to get in a word edge-wise. "Yeah. Great, good. Thank you. It's real nice."

The months of closeness with a group of teenagers had definitely rubbed off on Harvey. His usual slow, sarcastic way of talking had now become a hyperactive talk-before-you-think speech pattern. As the car pulled out, Harvey twisted around in the rear seat and waved frantically at the people he was leaving behind. "Bye guys! Bye!" He called back, knowing full well they couldn't hear him.

The "Yes! To Life Gang" had a simple message, accurately encapsulated in their name. The performance was a musical play that lasted about twenty minutes. The story was very basic: A young girl was worried about her popularity. All her "so-called" friends were taking drugs, and she had been offered it many times. Then one day, a 'girl from the bad side of the tracks' pressures the good girl into taking a hit of ecstasy. Sure enough, her life instantly becomes a living hell and she nearly dies from overdosing. Then her real friends – the "Yes! To Life Gang" come in and help her get back on the road to recovery, turning her on to the vast pleasures of a drug-free lifestyle.

And slowly, it became clear to Harvey why he had been chosen for the part. He was the gloomy, sullen bad girl from the other side of the tracks. He was perfect to play

the villain, set against the sugary happiness of the rest of the cast.

“So did all the checks clear? I really hope they cleared because I worked really really hard and for a long long time and it was okay, but I wouldn’t want to do it again, although I liked seeing the country n’ stuff.” Harvey asked Jean.

“Yes. Everything’s taken care of.” Jean reassured. “The tax problems are behind us.”

“Oh my God, I was so worried.” Harvey tucked his shoulder-length hair back behind an ear. “It would have totally sucked to go through all this and not get the money, you know? You have no idea how worried I was. I mean, I was really really worried.”

“No, everything’s just fine.” Jean paused. “But there is something I have to tell you about.”

“Yeah, you mentioned it last month! On the phone? Remember? Vice President of Customer Experience! That is such a cool title!” Harvey bubbled.

Jean looked a little closer in the mirror. Did he have his ears pierced? “No, honey. That’s not what I meant.” Harvey didn’t act like the man she remembered.

After Harvey had figured out that he was to play the downbeat character in the “Yes! To Life Gang” show, it had started to bother him. He had never really pictured himself as a villain. He wanted to be the good guy. So, as the weeks went on, he started to work a little harder, and wanted to make a better impression. Soon, he was suggesting to the producers that he could play one of the regular parts if it was okay.

Eventually, the time came, and Harvey sung and danced his heart out. He did very well in his new role. So much so,

they developed a rotation. Every few days or so, he'd play the bad girl. But more and more often, he'd play "Angie," the girl who loved to do extreme sports in her drug-free lifestyle. Sometimes he'd play "Maya," the girl who loved to use her brain and be a top student. And sometimes, he'd play "Brittany," the cheerleader who wanted a career in fashion design.

Harvey was convinced he was showing his superior acting abilities in his girlish roles. Why, the very fact that he could now recite all his lines with a bright, earnest smile on his face and sing his songs with the inner glow of a born-again Christian was proof enough. It wasn't as if he had started to think a little like the super-happy characters he played in the show. It was acting, of course. All acting.

Harvey stuck his head into the front. "Can we stop somewhere to eat? I'm heck-a starved. You know what I haven't had for a long time? Pizza. They never wanted to get us Pizza. It was hamburgers, chicken and Taco Bell. Why didn't they want us to have Pizza? I mean, what's up with that!?"

"I have dinner at home." Jean said. "I wanted to make it a bit of an occasion."

"Okay. I guess I've had enough fast food to make me explode." Harvey flipped the long hair out of his face and began to play with the zipper on his jacket. Jean had to keep driving, but the more she looked at Harvey, the more things she spotted.

Harvey was wearing a purple cord jacket with a hood that had fake fur trim. It was popular with girls these days – trendy, almost. He was also wearing what were obviously girl's jeans, a shiny dark blue denim that had flowers stitched along the cuffs.

But what made the biggest impression on Jean was the definition in Harvey's face. Or lack of it. Gone was the puffy fifteen year old girl 'look' he had when he started. Months of dancing had slimmed him down and taken the fat out of his body. If Jean didn't know better, she'd have said he had lost his baby fat. He looked like a healthy, young and vibrant fifteen year old girl. And he was smiling. Smiling – it wasn't exactly what Harvey was known for.

It was so unusual a sight that she had forgotten to mention the very important thing she needed to talk to him about. Until it was too late.

"You must be Christina." The man in Jean's house said to Harvey when they got to the door. He was about six feet tall, dwarfing Harvey by seven inches. He had a satisfied smile on his face. "You're even more beautiful than your Mother said you were."

Harvey smiled politely, nodded, and then slowly turned on his heel to face Jean. Through his smile he asked in a very quiet voice: "Who is he, Jean?" The cold, dead stare Jean remembered from long ago returned.

"Say hello to Patrick, dear," Jean asked, "Don't be rude."

Harvey whisked back around and slipped back into sweetie-pie mode. "Hi, Patrick." He stepped forward, shook his hand and then stepped back again.

Patrick turned his attention to Jean. "Didn't you tell her, Jean?"

"Tell me?" A pit formed in Harvey's stomach.

"Well, Patrick and I..." Jean's famous nerves started to flare up. "You see, that is, I..."

"Show him the ring." Patrick said.

Jean haltingly offered her hand to Harvey for viewing. "Patrick and I are..."

Two Forms of ID

“Your Mom and I are engaged!” Patrick proclaimed with pride.

Chapter 4: Crossed Purposes

“Sometimes, Jean, I don’t know what you’re thinking.” Harvey said.

“How many men have ever proposed to me, Harvey?” Jean had obviously practiced the answer to this question. “I’ll tell you how many. One. Patrick. It’s my one chance at happiness. You know that.”

Harvey’s pretty head was spinning, shocked into near stupor. Everything he had planned on was falling apart again. He just wanted to get things back to normal. “Couldn’t you have just told him?”

“That I had a daughter who is really my brother and he’s touring the country in a children’s acting troupe to avoid fraud charges?” Jean reminded him. “He’d have had me locked up!”

Harvey was seated on “Christina’s” bed, in “Christina’s” room, looking at “Christina’s” things, scattered about the room. Apparently, Jean had redecorated Harvey’s old room as a cover for her story with Patrick. She had thought of every detail. There were posters, a closet full of trendy teen fashions, and a vanity in the corner. And everything was pink, hot pink or violet. Harvey surveyed the room and buried his head in his hands.

“Why did you have to say anything about having a daughter at all?” Harvey wanted to know.

“How could I have hidden that?” Jean replied.

“Can we at least tell him now?” Harvey said, in a whine.

Jean stared into space. She didn’t have a good answer for that one. “I don’t know. I think he really does love me, but

I have to be sure, Harvey. Otherwise, he might leave me.” Jean’s hands started to tremble. “You hate me, don’t you?”

If there was one thing that Harvey had noticed about his sister was her newfound sense of calm. He heard it on the phone when he called on the road. It grew stronger every time he had talked to her. Now, she seemed at peace, which was something he had always prayed she would find.

Maybe that’s what a relationship could do for her. It would help her find that stability she had been looking for for so long. And now here she was, her hands shaking and body shivering, about to lose all that she had gained.

Grudgingly, Harvey took her hand and tried to comfort her. “It’s all right, Jean. It’ll be okay.”

Jean hugged her brother, and Harvey hugged back. “I’ll tell him if you really want me too, Harvey. I can’t keep hurting you like this.”

Harvey held her tighter. “It’s all right Jean. I’ll be Christina for a little while longer. You tell him when you’re ready. Just remember, I’d rather it be sooner than later, okay?”

Yes, he knew it was a mistake. But he had no real idea how he could stop this freight train of lies now.



“How’s it feel to be sleeping in your own bed again, short stuff?” Patrick asked Harvey the next morning. Harvey reflexively twitched at the nickname.

“Great!” Harvey said brightly. Four months of being a “Yes! to Life” troupe member had left him with the innate ability to fake happiness without even thinking about it.

“It’s so great to be back home!” Harvey sat down at the table in a shapeless nightgown he had found last night in his closet. It had a pattern of tiny strawberries on it.

The sound of cereal spilling into Harvey’s bowl temporarily halted conversation. Harvey had correctly figured the “Boo Berry” cereal in the cupboard was for the child in the house. It was then that Jean appeared in the hallway in her robe, yawning and stretching. “You’d better get off to work, hun.”

“I don’t have a job anymore...” Harvey started to say before he realized who Jean was talking to.

“Ha, ha, ha!” Patrick chuckled. “You don’t have to go to work for a few more years, Christina, do you?” Patrick continued to chuckle as he rose and put on his coat. He walked over to Jean and gave her a quick peck on the cheek. “I’ll be back by five thirty. What say I pick up some pizza on the way home? We’ll have a party! Just the three of us!”

Harvey sat up straight in his seat. “That’d be great! I’d love that!” He was obviously too used to going along with the group.

“I’ll see you then, my lovely ladies!” Patrick said, as he left the house.

“Oh God,” Harvey said, the instant the door closed. “I don’t know if I can keep this up.” He got up to go to the fridge to get some milk. “Look at me. I’m eating kid’s cereal even. God help me.”

“What do you think of Patrick?” Jean asked.

Harvey spooned a couple of mouthfuls before responding. “I guess he’s okay. He seems nice.”

“Yeah.” Jean replied dreamily.

“Hey, why aren’t you going to work?” Harvey asked. “Aren’t you going to be late?”

“I quit,” she responded.

Harvey coughed up a mouth-full of cereal. “You quit!?” He cried. “What... What... But... I... But... the dressing up... the commercials... I did it all for... *Why!?*”

“Patrick’s got a good job. He makes a lot of money. More than I ever will.” Jean smiled.

“You were a *vice president!*” Harvey couldn’t believe that the reason he had to start dressing like this in the first place was now irrelevant. “You... You had everything!” He spooned up his last few bits of cereal. “You just gave it up?”

“Well... yes.” Jean said. “I want to be his full-time wife. And if I never see that grey, life-sucking office again, it will be too soon.” She smiled with satisfaction.

“Yeah. Okay.” Despite his shock at learning this, Harvey stifled a yawn and picked up the bowl. He loudly slurped down the remaining milk. “What’s he do?”

Jean looked nervous for a moment. “Sales.”

“Sales?” Harvey said, only slightly curious.

“So, Harvey...” Jean said, obviously leading into a subject she wasn’t eager to broach. “I think we need to keep working on our cover story until we tell Patrick the truth, don’t you?”

Harvey sighed, slumped in his chair and then nodded. “Yeah. I guess.”

“So let’s just get in the habit of using the right names around the house. Right?”

Harvey nodded again, a frown worked its way around his clenched jaw.

“Why don’t we try it,” Jean asked. “What’s your name?”

“Dead Meat,” he said.

“That’s right, honey. You’re my daughter, Christina.” Jean looked at Harvey cautiously, ready to spot the twitch or the flinch that would signal when he had taken enough of this and was going to fight back. “And who am I?”

“Jean.” Harvey said.

“Mother. I’m your *Mother*.” Jean decided to push it. “Or maybe you should call me ‘Mom.’”

Harvey slid his jaw from side to side, his eyes trying to not look at Jean. “Mom.” He snorted a blast of air from his nostrils. Quickly he got up and left the kitchen, leaving the mess of his bowl and spoon behind. “Moms do the dishes.”

“I don’t want this to ruin our relationship, Harvey.” Jean said, seriously. “I really treasure you as a brother.”

“*What-ever*.” Harvey replied. He went to Christina’s room, and slammed the door behind him. He flopped on the bed. He turned to dress himself for the day. He chose a pair of his favorite panties, some half-clean jeans, a simple pink cotton cami top and did his makeup and hair.

Still feeling frustrated, he flopped onto the bed again and dialed a phone number. “Hey, Amber! It’s me, Christina!” He said merrily. “I said I’d give you a call, right?”

Harvey’s mood brightened considerably now that he was talking to a friend.

“No, I just wanted to call. My, uh... Mom is being a *jerk*.” Harvey sighed. “So how’s it going with you?”



“Patrick’s home!” Jean called from the living room. “He’s got dinner!”

It had become a habit, Patrick arriving home with dinner. Jean just wasn't up to cooking, so it was left to 'the man of the house' to bring home something to eat, and it had been this way for the past two weeks – ever since Harvey came home.

Bursting out of his room, Harvey appeared at the front door to relieve Patrick of his bounty. In a flash, all the dozens of Chinese take-out cartons had been opened, and Harvey was busy dumping a bunch of rice onto his plate.

"Must be hungry!" Patrick observed. Harvey only nodded in response, because his mouth was too full to answer. "I brought you more videos!" Patrick said, proudly.

Harvey smiled and took the DVD discs politely. Every day after work it seemed, Patrick had a handful of DVD discs to give to Harvey. They were usually inane teen flicks that were devoid of any real entertainment. Harvey knew that Patrick was just trying to be nice, so he always accepted them gracefully.

He had stored up about twenty of them before Jean had insisted that Harvey actually watch one or two of them in Patrick's presence, so he didn't feel insulted. But after a few weeks, it was now routine for Harvey to spend the last hour and a half of the night watching one of the DVDs – just to please Patrick, and by extension, Jean. He looked at what he had been brought tonight, and decided that watching "13 Going On 30" was going to be the best of the bunch.

"Have a nice day, honey?" Patrick asked Jean.

"Just us girls." Jean replied. Harvey grumbled something to himself.

Patrick smiled back. “Good. Good. Christina...” Harvey looked up, ready to respond. “Just curious. When do you go back to school?”

“Mom wants to home-school.” Harvey grabbed a spring roll and nibbled. That was the response Jean and Harvey had worked out to that question. They had a whole bunch of cover stories by now.

“What about while you were on tour?” Patrick asked. “I’m curious. Didn’t you need to be in school then?” He further queried.

“They had a tutor for us.” Harvey spat out a little cabbage as he talked. It was true. He had earned a B in math and a C in English without even studying. It helped that he already had taken Advanced Calculus 325 and Creative Writing 402 in college. He wiped the half-chewed cabbage on his pants.

“Christina! Watch your manners!” Jean scolded.

“Muth-errr!” Harvey complained, spitting out some bits of food.

“Chew. Then talk.” Jean said forcefully. Harvey mockingly exaggerated his chewing motion in response.

Patrick chuckled at the mother-daughter interplay. “Well, it must have been a very interesting four months on the road.”

Harvey shrugged. An awkward silence followed.

“Umm....” Patrick was at a loss for conversation. “So nothing happened today?”

“Nope.” Harvey answered. He took his plate from the kitchen to watch TV.

Jean picked up her plate and followed, making a silent “follow me” motion to Patrick. She had something to say to Harvey, and she was going to need backup.

Although transfixed by the television, eventually, Harvey glanced to his side. “Yes?” Harvey said to Jean, noticing her presence in the room.

“Christina, I got a call from an agent.” Jean said. “They left a message on the phone.”

Harvey spun around wildly. He had been in this conversation before and it had gotten him into this mess. He wasn’t about to repeat it. “No you didn’t.” He said, forgetting to be the chirpy teen he was pretending to be.

“Somebody who saw you on tour. He said he was very impressed with your singing and thought you were a great dancer. Said he thought you could be the next big star. The next Emily Grant. He asked if you wanted to do some demos and send them to the record companies.” Jean nonchalantly picked out some glazed pork from a carton. “I called back and told him you weren’t interested.”

“Good.” Harvey said, sharply nodding his approval.

“Uh.” Patrick said, in a way that suggested he had something to add.

Harvey looked at him, stopping all chewing. Jean did the same.

“Yeah, well, I got that call too.” Patrick explained. “I thought you’d be interested.”

“Did you.” Harvey said, accusingly.

“I sent him your demo disc.” Patrick looked very embarrassed.

Harvey shivered. He remembered that he still did have a demo DVD, one that he had made just before he had left on the tour. And it was just probably lying around the house, ready for anybody to find it.

Two Forms of ID

Patrick continued, looking nervous. “I mean, your mom said that you had been looking for work for so long, and I figured...”

“You didn’t sign anything, right?” He asked.

“No, of course not.” Patrick replied. Harvey returned his attention to the TV set. Then he turned his death stare at Jean.

“And you?” He said to Jean.

“No.” She answered quickly.

“Fine then. There’s nothing to worry about.” Harvey said, before turning his eyes to the TV again. Without any legal entanglements, there was nothing to worry about. He was sure that any moment, either Jean or Patrick was going to say “But...”

Fortunately, “but” never came.

Two Forms of ID

Chapter 5: Contraindications

“Harvey!?” David called from across the lawn. “Harvey!” Harvey, who was fidgeting with the lock to Jean’s front door, turned to see a man locking up his car. “David!” Harvey called, recognizing his friend. He ran along the walkway and tackled David in a bear hug. “Where have you been!?”

David had to find his feet again, knocked off balance by the embrace. “I’ve been around.” Harvey let go and started to guide David to the house. “I’ve been calling you and there’s no answer. I thought maybe your tour got extended.”

“Hey, well, I guess I should have called you n’ stuff.” Harvey said apologetically. “I’ve just been... occupied since I got back.”

David, now close up and personal with Harvey, noted that the man before him had undergone some drastic changes in almost every way. He barely even recognized his friend. His personality was definitely different, a lot more “up” than he thought Harvey was capable of.

Harvey must have just returned from some exercise or jogging, as he was wearing a ball cap, baggy sweatpants and a large loose t-shirt that almost fell to his knees. The shirt had the logo for the Powerpuff Girls on it. If he hadn’t seen this person at the front door of Jean’s house, he might have never made the connection to Harvey.

“Do you have another gig or something? Didn’t the money thing work out?” David asked. He wasn’t sure why Harvey was still pretending to be a girl.

“What?” Harvey responded. “No. I’m not working anymore.” He finally unlocked all the locks and opened the front door. “Mooo-oom! I’m home!” He called out.

David was a little startled to hear Harvey call out for his mother. She was living in Florida. Was she visiting?

“She’s not home. Cool.” Harvey went into the kitchen.

“You want a Pepsi?” He asked on his way.

“Beer?” David replied.

“Sorry! The beer’s not mine! It’s Patrick’s!”

“Who?” David thought for a minute. “Oh yeah, Jean told me about him! Is he living here?”

Harvey returned from the kitchen with two cans of Diet Pepsi and tossed one to David. “That’s why I’m still doin’ this.” Harvey said, referring to his appearance. He jumped onto the sofa and curled his legs under him as he grabbed the TV remote. “They’re engaged.”

“Really!” David said with surprise. He was one of the many that figured Jean would spend her life as an old maid, clinging to Harvey’s side. “Dude! That’s good news. But why...”

Harvey was flipping through ten channels a second. “All he knows is that Jean’s got a daughter. He doesn’t know the rest.”

“Ohhhh.” David said, finally getting the picture. “I mean, you’re gonna tell him, right?”

“Jean’s going to. When she’s ready.” Harvey sipped his drink. “Which better be soon. Believe me.”

David popped the top on the can, and started to drink down the strange non-alcoholic substance. “Urf.” He said to the can. He wasn’t used to it. “Um. So... You gonna be okay?”

“I’ll be fine. After six months pretending to be a girl, I can do it for a little while longer.” Harvey said, finally stopping the channel flipping. He opened up the DVD tray and popped in a disc. “Have you seen this movie? I love it.” As Harvey pressed play, “13 Going On 30” started on the TV. “I’ve seen this one at least... ten times now.”

“No. I missed it.” David said, dryly. “The money worked out okay?”

“The what?” Harvey replied.

David was a little worried. “The money for the trust fund?”

It took a moment for Harvey to catch on. “Oh...” It was coming back to him. “Yeah. The trust fund. That’s all worked out. Sucks that I won’t be able to touch it ‘till I’m 18, though.”

“You’re 23, Harvey.” David had to clarify.

“You know what I mean.” He said, dismissing his error with the wave of his hand. He then decided to remove the cap he was wearing, which released his shoulder-length hair.

David nearly jumped out of his skin when he saw the lush, well-kept, feminine hair on Harvey’s head fall to his shoulders. “Are you okay, man?” David had to ask.

“Yeah. Fine. Why?” An alarm went off on Harvey’s watch. He stopped it quickly.

“You just seem... different.” David was trying to say something very strange without sounding strange.

Harvey reached onto the table and stuck his fingers into a tiny bowl on the table. He found a few of his vitamins and popped them into his mouth and took a swig of the soda to wash them down.

David took a long look at that bowl. “Those aren’t your normal B-12’s are they?”

“Hmm?” Harvey said, not really listening. “I dunno.” He turned to show the incredulous expression on his face. “I’m not old enough to drive, you know.” He laughed. “So I don’t do a lot of shopping.”

David reached over and grabbed a few pills and took a look at them. “They’re awfully big for just vitamins.”

Harvey shrugged. “Started getting those while I was on the tour. Higher potency.”

David carefully examined the bowl full of various shaped and sized pills. “Mind if I try ‘em?”

“Okay. But don’t chew them – they’re gross tasting. Just swallow.”

“Thanks.” David said. Harvey’s attention was into the movie, and David pocketed the pills when he was sure he couldn’t be seen. “So, what’cha been up to?”

“Just stuff.” Harvey responded. Suddenly he remembered something. “Oh, man. There’s this guy.” Harvey said, before pausing to take a swig of cola. “This guy who keeps calling. He wants to sign me to a contract.”

“A contract? For what?” David was curious.

“Singing, jerk!”

“Singing?” David had to say, to make sure he heard that right. “As a girl?”

“This guy thinks I’ve got a great voice.” Harvey said, humorously. “No accounting for taste.” He seemed to ignore the more important part of David’s question. “He saw me on tour, and now he can’t stop trying to sign me.”

“Uh. Okay.” David needed to pause. “I was going to ask you about that. You’ve always had a high voice, Harv, but

right now you kinda sorta sound like a perky... cheerleader... or something.”

“I’ve been working on it!” Harvey said with pride. “I think I can still get it higher!”

“Good?” David replied, unsure that was the correct answer.

“Yeah, it’s good! The more range I have, the better I can sing.” Harvey took another sip from his can. “And it helps me pass, of course.”

“Okay.” David was more and more suspicious. “Pass?”

“As a girl – duh!” Harvey sprang up off the sofa. “I must stink. I’m gonna shower and change.” He tossed the remote to David. “You wanna do anything? Go anywhere?”

“You wanna see a game?” David asked.

“Yeah! Just give me a few minutes.” Harvey said, disappearing into the hallway.

David heard a few doors open and close before the shower noise began. He flipped through the channels until he just let it stop on some news program. He turned up the volume and checked down the hallway.

Quickly, he went to the front door to check and make sure Jean or Patrick weren’t pulling up in the driveway, and then he went into the kitchen. He didn’t know exactly what he was looking for.

David looked through all the cabinets and found nothing strange. Except for the Boo Berry. He moved on to the living room and opened the drawers and checked the shelves. He read through the book titles. He couldn’t find anything. He checked down the hallway and saw the bathroom door was still closed.

Carefully, quietly, he snuck his way down the hall, and abruptly stopped at the first door. Inside, the pink walls

and canopy bed made it clear there was a teenage girl living here. “Wow.” David muttered to himself. It was really authentic looking. The details were incredible. It really looked like Harvey was selling this “Christina” identity hard.

He opened up a drawer on the vanity, only to find a haystack of cosmetics. He moved over to the closet, and saw the small amount of clothing hanging there. Most of the clothes that should have been there were strewn about the room in chaos. He walked over to the bed, again checking for anything out of the ordinary.

David heard a loud gasp from behind him. He quickly turned to find Harvey standing before him in the doorway, naked to the world. David would have apologized, he would have come up with some excuse for violating Harvey’s privacy. But instead, he couldn’t tear his eyes away from Harvey’s body.

It curved. And not in the way a man’s body should.

The hips kind of flared. The shoulders were narrow. The neck was thin. His legs gently undulated in a very feminine shape. And where Harvey was trying to cover himself, he had very small lumps. On a girl, they would be called breasts.

“What!?!...” Harvey started to say.

David slowly approached Harvey and pulled Harvey’s arms away from his chest. He studied it and felt his throat go dry. “What’s happened to you, Harvey?” He croaked.

Harvey dove to avoid him, and grabbed a bed sheet to cover himself. “What do you mean?” He said.

“Harvey. What’s happened to your body?” David asked. “You’ve got...” He made the international sign for breasts by cupping his two hands.

“It’s just an infection.” Harvey said, trying to regain his composure. “Or something.” Harvey pulled the sheets off his bed to cover him more. “It’ll go away.”

“Harvey.” David said.

“It’s not your problem anyway. Why don’t you leave?” Harvey protested.

“Harvey.”

Harvey got loud. “Just get out! You’re invading my privacy!”

“*Harvey!*” David was louder.

Harvey slumped onto his bed. “I don’t know. I don’t know what’s happening. I... I... It started happening in Arizona. On the tour. It was just one day, I looked down and something had changed.”

“Has it gotten any worse?” David asked.

“Yeah.” Harvey turned away from David, so as not to look him in the eyes. “I thought it would stop. I thought it was the flu or a weird bug. But it seems to be happening faster, now.” Harvey seemed to be on the verge of crying.

“You need to see a Doctor.” David stated the obvious. “Right now.”

“I can’t see a doctor. Not like this.” Harvey said. “And I couldn’t tell Jean.”

David felt the vitamin pills inside his shirt pocket he had taken. “I think she knows.”

“What?” Harvey asked.

“I just don’t want you talking to Patrick or Jean about this, okay?”

“Why?”

“Just promise me, you’ll keep this to yourself, until I can check on something. Okay?” David grasped the small man by the shoulders. “Okay?”

Harvey looked up into David's eyes. "Okay."

"Good. I'll call you tomorrow morning. Just go on like normal, and wait for my call."

"Okay." Harvey sniffed. "Thanks, David."



David drove off that afternoon worried. He knew perfectly well what was going on, but he couldn't figure out the 'why' question. His best friend was being feminized, slowly and carefully.

"Feminized" – was that even a proper English word?

He had no idea of the details, but Harvey's world had somehow been cunningly manipulated, forcing him to make all the wrong choices, and forcing him to adjust to the impossible situation he was now in. And he was being made to adjust in a more permanent fashion than Harvey seemed to suspect.

When he had first heard of the 'Christina' plan, he had laughed hard and long. It was one of the funniest things he had ever heard. Now that humor had turned into horror. Harvey seemed more Christina than he did Harvey – just in body – and his mind didn't seem to be far behind.

It was Jean who was behind it. It had to be. She was the one with all these weak excuses to keep Harvey in skirts. How in the hell would she have ever gotten away with all the lies she's been telling Harvey? And this Patrick guy was in on it as well. He surely had something to do with it.

Did Jean want a family – and for some twisted reason decide to turn Harvey into her daughter? Did Patrick have some sort of control over Jean and Harvey? And why

didn't Harvey suspect anything? It was plainly obvious what was happening to his body. And he ignored it?

David pulled up to a forensics lab he used in some of his legal cases. Inside, he handed over the pills to one of his most trusted experts for analysis, and told him to "put a rush on it." David hung around for the results, knowing one thing for sure. They had estrogen in them. This was how Harvey was being changed physically. But mentally? Maybe it was drugs. Maybe it was hypnosis. Maybe it was something else.

When the tech came back with the results four hours later, David went over it in every detail. Sure enough, the pills were cocktails of estrogen and anti-androgens. There was a small percentage of human growth hormone, to accelerate the changes, and a smaller amount of progesterone for breast development.

David didn't find what he'd hoped he'd find. There were no trace of muscle relaxants, mind-altering drugs, or even sleeping pills. All these things did was alter the body's hormonal balance. The mental aspect of Harvey's change was still unsolved.

The next morning, he tried to call Jean's old number, but couldn't get through. It hadn't been disconnected, but the phone would ring once and then hang up making a funny clicking and humming noise. He knew well the sound. A caller ID block had been placed on his number. Someone there at the house didn't want him to talk to Harvey.

David parked his car down the street from Jean's house and waited patiently. A tall man in a business suit left around 7:45. That was probably Patrick, leaving Jean and Harvey inside. Soon after, David accidentally dozed off. He awoke sometime around two, cursing at himself for

sleeping. Looking at the driveway of the house, he saw that Jean's car was now gone. That meant that either Jean had left alone, or possibly both Jean and Harvey were gone. He waited a little while longer to pick up any more clues, but there were none forthcoming.

When David found himself at the front door of the house, he wasn't sure what to do. He'd have to tell Harvey about the pills, but after that, then what? If he was sensible, Harvey would leave with him right then and there. But if Harvey had been coerced in to staying, or if he didn't believe him, what was he going to do?

He rang the bell.

The curtain at the side of the door opened briefly, and the door started to unlock. "David! Why didn't you call?" Harvey ushered David inside. David stood there, contemplating exactly how he was going to say this. But before he could form a thought, he was attacked.

Harvey leapt up and wrapped his arms around him, screaming. "I'm rich! Two million dollars!" Harvey shrieked. David swam his way out of Harvey's hold and put him back down on the ground. He looked around to see the other people in the room. There weren't any.

Harvey, however, was hopping up and down with the goofiest look of glee on his face. "I'm rich!" He repeated. And he hugged David again. He had been into hugging lately.

"What!?" David needed to know what was going on.

"The contract!" Harvey said, still bouncing.

David's reply was to twist his face to indicate a lack of information.

"The record contract! The one I told you about? They want me to be a star!" Harvey caught his breath and pulled

the hair from his face. “They phoned me this morning. They like the demos I made so much, they’re going to remix them and release them on CD!”

David was still unable to form a reply.

“Two million dollars!” Harvey said, emphasizing the reason David should be happy for him. “They’re going to pay me two million! In advance!” Harvey started to bounce again, and David tried to hold him still.

“Harvey! I have to tell you something!” David tried to say. “The contract is getting Fed Ex’d here by four! That’s why I’m so glad you’re here! I need you to be my lawyer!” Harvey was an uncontrollable ball of energy. “Can you check the contract!? I can pay you any fee! A huge retainer! We’ll both be rich!”

“Harvey! They’re turning you into a girl!” David said.

“I don’t have to do anything! I just sign it and they release the CD!” Harvey went on.

David grabbed Harvey by the shoulders and shook hard. “Stop it!”

Harvey’s face turned to shock.

“The vitamins are hormones! Jean is turning you into a girl!” David said firmly.

Harvey had no reply. He wasn’t ready for that. His mind was away on vacation.

David lowered his voice. “Those B-12 vitamins. I had them analyzed.”

“W-W-W” Harvey sputtered. “What...?”

“They’re hormones. Estrogen.” David wanted to be as clear as possible. “They’re the pills they give transsexuals before surgery. Girl pills”

Harvey’s eyes widened out as his mind was about to complete its 180-degree turn. “What?”