

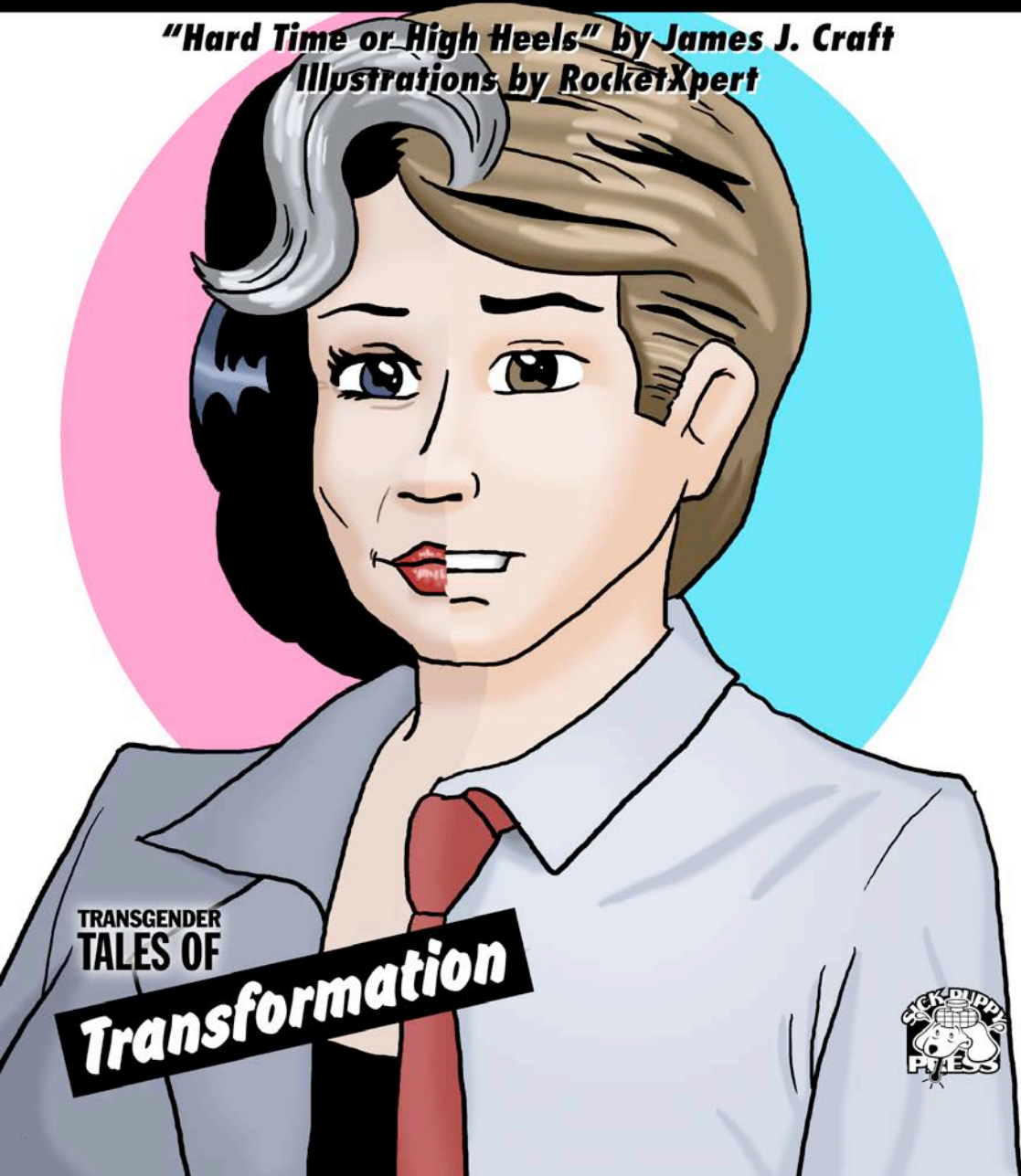
ADULTS ONLY

74 pages 20 illustrations

# I'M TURNING INTO MY MOTHER

THE STEPMOTHER SERIES: BOOK 4

"Hard Time or High Heels" by James J. Craft  
Illustrations by RocketXpert



TRANSGENDER  
TALES OF

**Transformation**



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

***I'M TURNING  
INTO MY  
MOTHER***

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**“Hard Time or High Heels” by James J. Craft**

**Illustrations by rocketXpert**

**Art effects & cover by Joe Six-Pack**

**A Tales of Transformation Story**



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[j6p@sixpacksite.com](mailto:j6p@sixpacksite.com)  
[www.sixpacksite.com](http://www.sixpacksite.com)

## HARD TIME OR HIGH HEELS

Colby Deeds had an impulse control issue.

The slow fuse that usually took place in most people – between the moment the emotions create a need or want, and when the brain logically determines whether or not it was actually viable or warranted – was clearly missing in his head.

If Colby wanted something... He got it.

If he wanted to *do* something... He *did* it.

It was just the way that he was wired, and he had learned to deal with it. It had made him a popular kid in college – the one who could always be counted on to ‘shotgun’ a beer can, or to go streaking through the campus. However, it had also made him a bit of risk taker in another way. Having no impulse control had made Colby a bit of chronic gambler. Worse still, he had surmised at an early age that there was no use in trying to fight his need to gamble, since there was essentially nothing he could do stop his urges. As far as Colby was concerned, it was just a part of him. He didn’t have a gambling *problem*. He was just a gambler – *by nature*.

The need to gamble started early in Colby’s life. People were always betting him that he wouldn’t do this or that, so much so that they began to put a cash prize on it. Winning *cash* made the process that much more exciting for him. So through high school and into college, he began to wager more and more on whatever he could. Soon he was visiting the racetrack, then began to move towards the casino floor. It was *there* that his ‘hobby’ (as he referred to it as) really began to overtake his life. Whether it was the throw of a craps table, or the spin of the roulette wheel, or for that matter the ringing bells and flashing lights of a slot machine, it was for Colby an adrenaline rush that he couldn’t be without. It was just a part of who he was.

So while others would acknowledge that they had ‘problem’ and deal with it, Colby just kept pushing forward into the great gambling abyss, until he was no longer welcomed in the local state-run casinos. State-approved casinos had to worry about things like ‘liability.’ If they allowed a person like Colby to continue to wager, it was possible he could litigate them for not stopping him.

“Like I’d ever sue a casino for *not* stopping me from gambling,” he lamented over a drink to his friend Melvin at a local pub. He had just been asked to leave, after being notified that he was no-longer welcome at the local racetrack, the last place within a reasonable driving distance that he had been able to wager at. “I should sue them for not *allowing* me to gamble. It’s my constitutional right to be able bet money on stuff, isn’t it?”

Melvin chuckled, “I’m pretty sure there’s an amendment in there somewhere about the ‘right to bear arms and lose money.’” The two men snickered together for a moment before taking drinks from their beer steins.

“You know...” Melvin said after a long pause, “There’s always Casino Electra.”

“Casino what?” Colby replied. He knew the name of every single gaming-house in the tri-state area, but he had never heard any Casino called ‘Electra.’

“Casino Electra,” his friend repeated, “think of it as the Casino that you’ve been practicing for.”

“Oh?” Colby said with a chortle. “Well if that were really the case, you’d think I’d have known about it. Right?”

“True,” Melvin began, pausing to take another drink, “But Electra isn’t exactly open to the public. It’s kind of an ‘invitation only’ deal.”

Colby raised an eyebrow and set down his beer glass. Suddenly, he was *very* interested, “Oh?” he grinned. “Go on...”

“Well, it just so happens that since I’m already a regular patron there...” he paused, “I *could* get you an invite... If you like.” He brought his pint of beer back up to his mouth for another ‘swig,’ “I know people there.”

Colby paused to ponder the offer. “Well, I don’t know,” Colby said, knowing perfectly well he desperately wanted in. “What if I end up breaking the house, what would your *people* think about me taking all their money?”

The other man laughed, “Oh their *people* are pretty well financed.”

“So this is like a ‘private’ casino?” a curious Colby inquired.

“You might call it that,” the acquaintance grinned. “Though the occasionally public figure has been seen there... But I’ve probably said enough. Are you interested or not?”

Colby’s face gave the answer before his mouth could open. “Oh yeah! I’m there! When do we leave?”

“Take it easy. I’ve got to make a call first,” Melvin said. “But let’s say I meet you tomorrow night, ten o’clock,” he finished off his beer and stood up, handing Colby a small purple business card. “Meet me here.” Colby took the card and read it over. It said simply ‘Electra – 454 Crone Street, Unit E.’

“Where the heck is...” Colby stopped mid-sentence, when he realized that his friend was no longer standing beside him. For that matter, his friend was nowhere to be seen.

His ‘friend’ was someone that Colby had gotten to know from the high-roller sections of the local Casinos. They had somehow consistently ended up at the same gaming tables, and over time had developed something of a friendship, though other than his name and favorite brand of whiskey, Colby didn’t really know *much* about Melvin. He wondered for a moment if he knew him well enough to trust that this ‘Electra’ idea was really a good one.

But Colby Deeds had an impulse control problem.

So while he may not have known much about ‘Melvin,’ he knew enough to know that his ‘friend’ had just given him a chance to see how the *real* high rollers lived – that was all he needed. Besides, with his being barred from entering any Casino in a hundred-mile radius, it wasn’t like he had a lot of other options. So without another thought, Colby spent the next twenty-four hours eagerly waiting to meet Melvin at the address that was written on the card.



The next night, at nine-fifty-eight, Colby was looking up and down a very quiet and dark Crone Street. If there *was* a casino nearby, it was *very* well hidden. The exterior of the building at 454, was less than Colby had expected. It was old, *very* old. So old in fact, that it still had the name of the original occupant carved in stone above its front door, 'Tri State Electric Company,' it read. The original doors and windows had been removed and capped with steel. A nondescript entry door around the side of the building was labeled 'E,' where Colby was standing and waiting. He noticed several cameras mounted on the side of the structure, and the parking lot was surrounded in tall fencing, and full of expensive cars, to the side.

*This must be the place*, he thought to himself. Expensive cars and security cameras could only mean one thing – high-rollers.

At nine-fifty-nine, Melvin tapped him on the back, "Ready?" he asked.

Colby jumped, then turned to his friend, "I was beginning to think you weren't going to show."

Melvin cackled a laugh, then turned to the large steel door in front of them. He turned the handle and nodded at the very large bouncer who was posted on the other side. "Good evening gents," the large man said as Colby and Melvin passed by, "Good luck tonight."

Colby followed Melvin inside the building, where Colby discovered more of the same. It was dark, musty and run-down, with dusty hallways lined with seemingly abandoned offices. At the end of the hall, another sturdily built bouncer, who nodded at the pair of the men as he opened the door for them, "Good luck tonight gents," the man repeated the message of the first bouncer.

*Where the hell is Melvin taking me?* Colby wondered to himself as he stepped through the doorway.

All was revealed in moment as he was hit with the sound of loud techno music, mixed with the familiar chime of slot machines and the hum of excited conversation. The noise filled Colby's ears before his eyes could see what lay ahead. However, once his eyes had passed the doorframe, his sensory inputs were filled with the vision of the most elaborate and lavishly decorated gaming floor that Colby had ever laid eyes on.

Tall roman columns and brightly lit fixtures of neon and L.E.D.'s were everywhere. Ornately decorated walls and plush carpeting abounded. Most important were the excited expressions on faces of the casino patrons.

Clearly, Electra was 'electra-fying.'

There were card tables, roulette wheels, and endless rows of slot machines of every type and sort. Everything was as state of the art and gleamingly new as could possibly be imagined.

Colby felt faint.

This was the Casino that he had been dreaming of.

“Well?” Melvin asked him in a rhetorical tone, “What do you think?”

“I think this is what heaven looks like to gamblers!” Colby joked.

“Well then, welcome to heaven!” The other man smiled as they walked across the gaming floor. Pretty barmaids in tight-fitting miniskirts and high heels were scurrying about with trays of drinks, while the patrons smoked and drank and gambled.

Wow, Colby thought, *you don't see that in a state-monitored casino.*

Melvin's direction changed suddenly, and his posture became rigid and uncomfortable and he kept glancing over at a group on the far side of the floor. There two tall men with sunglasses on were walking with a very large man in a dapper suit with beard and ponytail. It was obvious that he was the man-in-charge, as others seemed to be shaking his hand and air-kissing his cheeks as he passed them.



Colby shrugged and continued to look around the floor, planning where he would go first. Would he play some cards? Colby noticed the many different versions of poker that were being played, in addition to baccarat, blackjack, and even some he never seen before. Maybe he would hit the slots, or maybe some dice games – they *all* seemed to be here.

“Wow!” Colby said to his friend, “Where do we even start?”

Melvin continued to act nervous and anxious, as he watched the large man in the dapper suit. He made no reply, as preoccupied as he was..

“Maybe a drink?” Colby asked, spotting a nearby waitress with a tray of liquor. But his eyes kept scanning the room, as his mind raced.

“Um,” Melvin stammered, still looking nervous. “Sure.”

Before the two could place their order, a voice called out behind them, “Mister Kane!” it said.

The two men turned around to see the dapperly-dressed ponytailed man and his entourage standing before them. Melvin’s face looked like all the blood had drained out of it. Colby snickered to himself, realizing he had never even known Melvin’s last name until then.

“Big Pete” Melvin coughed, forcing a smile.

The man looked disapprovingly at Colby for a moment before his face turned to a jovial smile,

“Well hello there!” the big man chuckled, “And who do we have here, Melvin?”

“This is Colby...” Melvin motioned uncomfortably to the large man.

“Colby Deeds,” Colby extended his hand for the large man to shake.

“Colby,” Melvin continued to speak, “This is Peter Saints.”

“Welcome to my little gaming house Colby,” Mr. Saints smiled, looking down at Colby’s extended hand. He nodded, but didn’t shake it, “People ‘round here call me ‘Big Pete,’” he said in a shockingly squeaky voice, “probly ‘cuz of my personality.”

Colby was taken aback by how high-pitched a voice the man had. It was like a puppet’s voice box had somehow been planted inside a linebacker’s body. The contrast was staggering.

Big Pete giggled softly, looking around his group to make sure they were all still laughing with him. “If you need anything at all just ask okay?” He smiled at Colby before pulling Melvin close and whispering something in his ear. Melvin – looking terrified – nodded twice before the big man released him. Then, as if nothing at all had happened, he turned and gave a wave befitting of a teenaged beauty-queen, before heading off in another direction. “Toodles!” he chimed as he left the two men standing, one in fear, one in confusion.

“He’s a little...” Colby paused for a moment, “different... Isn’t he?”

Melvin laughed nervously, “That’s one way of putting it,” he motioned towards the gaming floor, “But trust me, you don’t want to see his bad-side. There’s a



reason why this place is hidden away from the real-world. It isn't exactly... Uh... Conventional."

Colby nodded, reading into his friend's comments. There was obviously something 'going on' and it was best that he didn't ask what. He let his eyes return to scanning the Casino from side to side, as he picked his 'poison.' Conventional or not, he intended to make the Casino it his new favorite place.



Good Deeds Automotive Group was bustling, which was the way Eileen Jones liked it. The relentless TV ads, newspaper ads, community promotions, radio spots, direct mail and billboards made sure of it stayed that way. Good Deeds was known throughout the area, and it was almost impossible to buy a car that wasn't sold by Good Deeds. They owned dealerships up and down the highways and interstates, both under the Good Deeds valuable brand name and under others.

At the hub of the enterprise was Eileen Jones. She was the one who had inherited the run-down dealership from her husband Walter Deeds and turned it into a syndicate of 27 dealerships. She still worked at the original location, still at her original desk, shaking hands with the customers in a gleaming, sparkling showroom that was cleaner than an operating theater.

Appearances were important to Eileen, and she made sure her showrooms were the cleanest and most modern in the industry. Customers often came to her dealerships just to set foot inside the impressive, awe-inspiring buildings. Not a day went by that Eileen didn't take a moment to look around and be impressed with what she had built.

But these days, she also would look around and see something that punched her in the gut. Colby.

Eileen glared at her step-son with expression of contempt and disappointment that only a parent ... or step-parent ... could have. He was seated behind his desk, as always, typing into his computer, as always, while she was on the sales floor hustling the staff and brokering the deals.

She shook her head. *What a disappointment*, she said to herself.

"Ms. Jones?" One of her salesmen approached her with a stack of papers and a serious expression.

"What's up, Ron?" she smiled politely. Ron was, next to her, the most experienced and most productive salesperson at this dealership. He had been a loyal employee since the beginning, and had been a great friend and supportive figure after the passing of her late husband.

Ron spoke in a low tone, "It's that red Malibu, they offered five below list, I countered with eighteen, but they're stuck on like... Sixteen." He stopped to let her catch up before continuing, "We've had that thing for months. Our cost is about fourteen five. If I..."

“\$14,356,” Eileen interrupted.

Ron was always impressed with her knowledge of the business. “If I can get sixteen five...” His voice trailed off, anticipating an answer

Eileen nodded. She had faith in Ron’s instincts. “Route them through our financing. Not the bank. Don’t sacrifice a cent more.” Selling the car through Good Deeds Finance would net more profit than through the financing companies. As long as the customer didn’t know her interest rate was higher, and had a higher down payment, that was their loss, not hers.

She glanced back at her step-son’s office and quietly lamented that fact that he possessed no such instincts. “Do what you have to, Ron,” she said with a smile, “I trust your judgement.” Ron nodded and returned to his client under Eileen’s watchful eye. There were a few words exchanged, and some hemming and hawing, but eventually the deal was struck and handshakes abounded.

Eileen smiled again then returned her focus to her stepson. *She* had given him *every* opportunity to *avoid* being the man that his father had been... But to no avail.

She thought back to the early days when she had first been hired to work at ‘Good Deed’s Car Sales.’ Eileen was a young hotshot bitch – by her own admission – and Walter Deeds was a recent widower who didn’t have a clue how to run a business. His wife had done it all, and now with her having passed, things were starting to come apart. Walter was lazy and disorganized – the last person on earth who should ever run his own business. But he had a dream of self-employment, and a love a cars. His late wife’s father had loaned him the money to get started. So selling cars is what Walter started doing. But it wasn’t until he hired Eileen, that things *really* took off.

She knew how to make things work. She had the mind of a steel trap as the saying goes, and quickly became Walter’s number one asset. So much so, that a beautiful romance developed between them.

Walter became a figurehead of the company, and Eileen was the one that made it all happen. Often, Walter would stay at home, taking his son to ball games, while Eileen made the money.

When Walter died suddenly, Eileen barely took a week to recover. She dusted herself off and went back to work, with the intent to turn the dealership into the largest in the state... While her step-son waltzed off to an expensive school.

He wasn’t a total lout. He did well with numbers, and managed to squeak out of college with a finance degree, which Eileen thought would make him the perfect man for the job of company CFO, or head accountant, as she often called him.

But it was looking like he was even somehow screwing *that* up.

Eileen sighed and marched into his office, completely catching him off guard.

“Eileen... Hi...” he muttered, as he tried to look like he hadn’t been playing online poker for the past hour, “What’s up?”



“At least *look* like you give a crap about the business, Colby! Can you at least do that for me?” She sneered. “Have you found out where that money disappeared to yet?” She said with a firm tone.

“Uh,” he stammered, “No... Not *yet*. But I’m sure it didn’t get far,” he chuckled.

Eileen didn’t see the humor. “Colby,” she began, “When ten thousand dollars goes missing,” she paused again to choose her words carefully, “it becomes your number one priority to *find* it. Now quit playing poker and get to work!”

Colby scoffed, as if trying to look indignant at the suggestion that he had been playing online poker since the moment he sat down that morning. “I... Wasn’t! I was...” he paused, realizing that it was useless to argue. He sighed, “Okay. I’ll figure it out.”

“See that you do! I can’t have that kind of incompetence in my organization! Good Deeds Auto Group has a spotless reputation, and I don’t need our name in the news!” Eileen glared a hole through Colby’s noggin , and then left his small office.

Colby lowered his head into his hands on the desk top. He knew *exactly* where the ten thousand dollars had gone. In fact, the number was closer to twenty, and would have been completely hidden if not for that snoopy old salesman *Ron*. Colby scoffed again. *Ron*, that goody-two-shoes and his stupid bonuses.

The business was half his anyway, at least it would be in five years, if certain sales targets were met, or something like that – he hadn’t read his father’s will very carefully. The point was, that the missing money was really out of his half anyway. So what was the big deal? He was just loaning it to himself, basically.

Besides, if he hadn’t made the payment in cash, Big Pete would probably have broken his legs already.

Things at the casino had not exactly gone well in the last several weeks.

It had been a few months since Melvin had first introduced him to the illicit gambling house, and Colby’s losses had mounted up. All-told, he was into the house for over twenty-five grand. Big Pete had demanded a payment if he wanted any more credit extended, hence the money he had ‘borrowed’ from his stepmother’s company.

*His* company. Or at least half of it.

He started to get the itch again. He needed to cut work early and head to the casino. He felt a lucky streak coming on, and this time – for sure – it would be *his* turn to win big. He looked around the dealership, and saw that everyone was occupied with a client or task. No one would see him leave, or know that he’d gone. He grabbed his coat and headed for the door.

Colby had an impulse control problem.

From across the showroom, Eileen caught a glimpse of her step-son exiting. She grunted in disgust as her blood boiled. For all the stress Colby had caused her over the years, for some stupid reason, she cared deeply about his well-being. She knew that one day he would need her help, and when that day arrived, she would make certain that he paid dearly for it.



The bartender smiled as he handed Colby and Melvin their drinks. Canadian whiskey and cola with a spritz of lime. The activity, noise and light of the casino was filling them both with energy and hope. Both men had been given new leases on life, thanks to extended credit from the house. Big Pete had been quite pleased to see substantial payments made on their accounts, and had authorized the advances.

Melvin had sold his house and moved into a shady apartment to bring his 'tab' down to under fifty 'G's,' while Colby's contribution, illegally removed from a business he currently had no claim to, had reduced his balance to just over ten. Both men were feeling lucky, and ready to gamble.

They started on a craps table where things started off well. They turned ten grand, into fifteen, before heading to roulette. There, they each added another seven to their winnings.

"Wow!" Melvin gushed, "We are on *fire* tonight!"

Colby slapped his partner on the back. "You got that right! Where to now? Poker? Blackjack?"

Melvin shook his head, "Blackjack's not my thing and a friend told me the poker tables are cold tonight. I'm hitting the slots."

"The one-armed bandits? Are you kidding? What are you... 70 years old?" Colby teased.

"No... I'm just following the money, man," he replied, "We should stick together, I think it multiplies our luck."

Colby took a drink of his whisky concoction, then shook his head, "No-can-do. That one-eyed Jack is calling me..." He motioned towards the blackjack tables.

"Suit yourself." Melvin shrugged. "But nobody I know has ever, *ever* made money on those tables. Did you see the Bentley that Big Pete has? Rumor has it that he bought it in cash with a week's earnings from the card tables, poker and blackjack together. I'd steer clear of those games if I were you."

Colby snickered. "Not tonight Mel," he proclaimed, "No risk – no reward. And I feel a *big* reward coming my way tonight." With that, he took his lack of impulse control and headed to the blackjack tables. It was a five-hundred-dollar buy in, and the table was quiet, just him and the dealer.

It was a good sign. Or so he convinced himself.

He went a few rounds, playing it safe, and made a couple of grand. *Melvin's such a sissy*. He thought to himself, as he doubled his wager to a grand.

"Hit me," he flashed a smile at the dealer who dealt himself an eight and Colby a ten. Then placed a card, face-down next to them. "I'm going to stay."

The dealer turned Colby's card to reveal a smiling jack of spades, "Twenty-one" the dealer said with a slight smile, then turned his card over. It was a king. Colby won.

This continued for a few more rounds. 19. 21. 18. 20. Win after win came until Colby's confidence got the better of him. He bet everything he had on the next hand, some forty-thousand dollars. The dealer paused for a moment, as if wanting to make sure that Colby was certain of his wager, but Colby was cocksure in his decision. "Deal me in," he said, with a glinting smile.

The dealer turned a ten, then turned an ace for himself, and placed another card face-down on the table next Colby's. Colby tapped the table and the dealer turned the card over. It was another ten. The crowd that had developed around Colby's table 'ooooed' as the card was revealed.

"Split," Colby said, and the dealer separated the two tens and placed new cards, face down, next to each. By splitting his pair, he had given himself the chance to increase his winnings substantially. The dealer revealed the first of the two cards, it was a six. Colby motioned for another card, which turned out to be a four. He stayed at twenty. The dealer then revealed the card next to the second ten.

Another ten.

The crowd gasped, some clapped, assuming that he had won. The dealer, however, wasn't finished. He turned his card to reveal a ten, and those who knew what it meant, knew it was bad.

Colby skin lost all of its' color and the room began to spin.

He met up with Melvin on the slot machine floor, who had earned himself a respectable sum there. He could tell by Colby's expression, that his experience at the card tables had not gone well. He tried to think of something reassuring to tell him but all that came out was "I told you those tables are cold."

Melvin realized that his words were not very comforting, at all.



Alone in her house, Eileen clicked through the online dating profiles for the third time in a row, hoping to find someone that stood out for her. Like the first two times, she found nothing but disappointment, so she closed her laptop and put it aside.

Here she was, in her late forties, with fifty and menopause coming at her like a freight train. She was just so damn lonely. Ever since Walter had passed away, she'd thrown herself into the business with everything she had. She had built that place from a shady dump into a local institution. What did she have to show for it? Graying hair and wrinkling skin.

"Old maid," she said to herself. That's what she had become. An old maid. When she was a teenager, she had lived in fear of the term. "Be social or you'll become an old maid," people said. "Smile and look pretty or you'll be an old maid." Now it was true. She was an Old Maid.

She got up and went to the bathroom mirror. She wasn't so bad. She still had some good things going for her. Her body was in great shape, her face hadn't creased too badly, and her breasts hadn't dropped yet.

*Yet.* How much time did she have left until she was hunched over and using a walker? How long until she was spending her days finishing crossword puzzles and canning preserves?

But like every night she thought about such things, she managed to turn away the dread of being alone and find a way to fall asleep.



That week, Colby's productivity hit an all-new low. He now owed the casino over fifty grand, on top of the money he had already 'borrowed' from his Step-mother's coffers. The thought of trying to find that kind of money made him sick, as he knew the consequences if he *didn't*.

He spent the week trying to find ways of syphoning more money from the dealership, without his stepmother noticing. He was good with money, she had always said that – but what she didn't realize is that he was especially talented at *losing* it.

Eventually, he found a way to slip another ten thousand dollars out of the books, and was fairly certain he could hide it. A week after that, he went off to the casino to make a deposit at on his debt.

But things had changed.

When he approached the doors, the bouncers didn't let him through. Instead, they guided him towards another part of the derelict building. One that Colby suspected not many people knew about.

In a dark and quiet abandoned office, Colby eventually found a very unhappy looking Big Pete and one of his henchmen. Pete motioned for him to come in as his goon looked on from behind his sunglasses.

"What have you got for me?" Pete asked, his usual chipper tone having been replaced by a very deep and serious voice.

"Um," Colby gulped, "It's ten grand. It's all I could get at the time..."

"Ten grand?" Pete asked, "Did you say ten grand?"

Colby nodded, "Um... yeah..."

Pete moved closer to where Colby was standing. "I crap bigger than ten grand. You better find some money *somewhere* or your little problem is gonna become a *big* problem, you understand?" Pete's vocal tone had gone from unusually high and soft to very low and growly. It was as if his voice and body finally matched.

Colby found him to suddenly be *quite* intimidating.

“I...” Colby started say, but he quickly lost his nerve, instead choosing to sigh and lower his eyes, “Yes Big Pete... I’ll find it... somewhere...” his voice trailed off.

Big Pete seemed elated, and his strangely unfitting voice returned. “Fantastic!” he said in a seeming chirp. “I just *knew* you were resourceful like that,” he said, patting Colby on the shoulder. “You bring back what you owe and we’ll be fine, capisce?”



Colby mindlessly nodded. He dared not argue with the man, yet he knew full well that coming up with the money would be damn near impossible. But he had no choice at this point.

The very next day, Colby went into work earlier than he had ever gone in before. Eileen was quite surprised to see him waiting in the parking lot when she unlocked the door in the morning. Colby was often the last one in, so the sight of him walking in behind her was something of a novelty.

“Good morning,” she smiled at him with an amused expression. “You’re awfully early today...” she let her voice trail off as if hoping he would fill in the blanks for her – which he soon did.

“I just wanted to get to working some month-end stuff.” He smiled with an odd expression. “You know, early-bird gets the worm kind of thing, right?”

Eileen had known Colby for most of his life, and never, *ever* had she seen him trying to be early *anything*, bird or otherwise. She shrugged as he walked past her to his office without saying another word.

*Maybe he’s turning over a new leaf?* She optimistically hoped to herself, even though she was pretty sure that much more than a leaf would be needed to make any change in *that* boy’s life.

More like turning over a whole *tree*.

Colby spent the morning, and much of the afternoon, working busily in his office. Eileen, still in a state of disbelief, dropped in to check up on him often, figuring that he was playing solitaire, or surfing the internet for porn, or playing some silly online role-play game – all things she had caught him doing before.



But to no avail. He seemed, by all accounts, to be actually working on real stuff. Real, actual accounting-type stuff.

Eileen shrugged and went on with her day.

The trend continued for most of the week. Colby was now the first one in, and last one out, barely stopping for lunch. He had surrounded himself with files and documents – mostly to make his step-mother think he was doing actual productive work, but partially to help him with his ‘scheme.’

Colby needed to pilfer fifty-thousand-dollars from his stepmom’s business by Friday, or he was pretty sure he was going to become fish-bait in the local river. If fear is a good motivator, then Colby was extremely motivated, as Big Pete had effectively scared him half to death. By Friday, he had cleverly skimmed nondescript amounts from several company accounts, but it wasn’t going to be enough, and he didn’t have much time left to wait. He needed another thirty-thousand dollars – pronto.

He was scanning through different files trying to figure out a way to raise more money, when he stumbled across various personnel documents, including some very sensitive information for his stepmother Eileen.

He held up the file, and paused for a moment. He had all the information that would be required to someone to apply for a credit card right in his hands – Social Security Number, Date of Birth, Current Address, copy of a signature.

Colby took a deep breath. If he did this – and anyone found out – he could go to jail. On the other hand, if he *didn’t* do it, he was pretty sure that Big Pete was going to have him ‘offed.’ The choice looked pretty clear.

Besides, Eileen was a successful business person – she must have a great credit rating. Getting a quick loan for thirty-grand would be a snap.

Colby took a big breath, and let out a big sigh. He knew what he was about to do was extremely illegal, but Colby Deeds had an impulse control problem.



A week had passed since Colby had falsified not one, but *three* credit card applications for ten thousand dollars each. The cards had been express-delivered to him, and that night, he had used them to get cash advances at three different local banks. He had then driven over to Big Pete’s casino to hand deliver the ill-gotten cash, along with the rest of the money that he owed.

“I knew you’d come through.” Pete smiled as he counted the money slowly and carefully. Once he was certain that all was accounted for, his smile changed to a stern expression, “But now that we’re square, let me be perfectly clear,” he leaned forward and spoke deeply and softly to Colby, “I don’t ever wanna see your face again, capisce?”

Colby looked shocked, but nodded affirmative anyway. A part of him had half-expected that Big Pete would allow him to return to the gaming floor now that his debt was repaid.

“You’re a bad risk,” Pete continued, “So if you ever see me coming towards you – you better make every effort to hide, or at least get the hell out of the way, because I might not be able to control my temper, and god knows what I might just do.”

Colby gulped, then nodded again. He could tell by Pete’s expression that he wasn’t messing around. He had seen enough gangster films to understand the ‘code.’ The debt was repaid, but the dishonor he had caused could never be forgiven. To Big Pete, Colby was dead.

The drive home was a watershed moment for Colby. He understood that his gambling habit had nearly gotten him killed, and that it had turned him into a petty thief in the process. He swore off gambling forever, and made a pact with himself to refocus his energies into repaying the money he had ‘borrowed’ from Eileen as soon as he could, so that she would never know it had happened.

But Colby’s luck would continue to be nothing but bad.

Monday morning, a very somber looking Eileen was at the dealership earlier than usual. Colby arrived at his new-normal time of an hour before open, but was surprised to see both Eileen and Ron waiting by his office door when he entered.

“Got a moment?” Eileen said with a stern expression, pointing at her office.

Colby nodded. He hoped that his wasn’t what he thought it could possibly be.

A trap.

He entered the office and took a seat, with Eileen and Ron following behind him. Eileen shut the door and took her place behind the desk, with Ron standing beside her.

“Colby,” she began, “I don’t even know what to say to you.”

Colby could see tears starting to well up in her eyes, something that never, *ever* happened. She took a moment to collect herself before continuing.

“I have given you *every* opportunity here. I’ve paid for your schooling, I bought you a car, I gave you a job,” she paused and swallowed her emotions with a enormous ‘gulp,’ “I’ve loved you like my own son. I have done everything that I can to help you, to love you... And in return I’ve asked for nothing. Nothing but your respect,” she paused again, “respect and honesty.”

*Uh-oh*, Colby thought to himself.

“Your Stepmom and I spent the weekend going through the books Colby,” Ron piped in, “And we found some very...” his voice wavered as he looked at Eileen for a moment, then turned his focus back to Colby, “very *irregular* figures. To the tune of thirty-thousand dollars,” he then paused to make sure that Colby was following, “That’s *twenty-thousand* more than we originally thought Colby. Twenty-thousand!”

“And all of the irregular transactions were linked back to one person,” Eileen now chimed in, “You.”

Colby sighed and sat back in his chair, *At least she doesn't know about the credit cards*, he thought.

"And then I got a call from First Central Pacific Mid-West Bank," she continued, watching Colby's eyes for a reaction.

*Oh-crap*, he thought to himself.

"I don't do any business at FCPM," she continued, "So you can imagine my surprise when they welcomed me to the 'FCPM Family' on Friday night. And when I discovered that I had obtained a ten-thousand dollar credit card there, and already made a cash advance on it... Well, you can see how I'd been a little concerned."

Colby's face began to feel cold. He was pretty sure it was due to the blood leaving it.

"And I'm sure you would understand how I'd be even *more* concerned when I called my friend Maggie, who's a vice-president at FCPM and she forwarded me a security camera video that showed *my* stepson making that cash-advance at an ATM on Friday afternoon, right?"

Colby felt instantly both ill and faint. The only saving grace he could think of in this situation was that she had only found out about *one* credit card of the three that he had received.

He prayed it stayed that way.

"I suggested that Eileen call the police right away," Ron blurted out, "But she wanted to hear from you first. Give you a chance to explain."

Eileen looked Colby square in the eye, "Well? Can you? Can you explain all this Colby?"

Colby sighed and slumped forward in his chair, "Well..." he began, "I..."

The pressure got to him. He was as cool as ice when gambling away thousands of dollars, but when it came to face-to-face confrontation, he caved in quickly. He let the air escape his lungs in defeat, and began to tell the story of Casino Electra, Big Pete, and his huge debt. By the time he was done, Eileen looked extremely disappointed, while Ron was shaking his head repeatedly.

"See," Ron exclaimed, "He's involved with the mob! I told you we should have called the police. *Now* what are we going to do? We don't need this kind of trouble Eileen."

"Ron?" Eileen looked over at her top salesman, "Give us a moment please." She glanced at the door, then back at him.

"But Eileen, he's a..." Ron began.

But Eileen cut him off. "I know what he is. But he's also my stepson. Please, give us a moment" She now pointed at the door.

Ron sighed and slumped forward with a defeated expression. He rolled his eyes at Colby, then headed for the office door. Eileen waited for the door to close before she continued.

“He’s right you know,” she said, “he wanted to throw you right under the bus. He had already dialled ‘nine-one,’” she chuckled, “and his finger was on the other ‘one,’ ready to dial it, too. I literally had with talk him out of it.”

She watched as Colby smiled and sat back in his chair, as if he was starting to relax.

“And by all rights I should have let him!” She shouted with a somewhat more serious tone. The sound of his stepmother scolding him caused Colby to resume his original tense position.

“Do you know what you’ve done Colby?” She asked in a half-yelling, half-asking voice, not expecting an answer, “You’ve committed a federal offense, a felony. You could go to prison for this, Colby. *Prison!* Whatever it was that this mobster said or did to you, must have been pretty serious for you to have done something like this. Am I right?”

Colby nodded.

If it weren’t for the fact that you were Walter’s son – Walter’s *only* son – I would have called the police myself. But I’ve always considered you as a son myself, Colby, and I know that a boy like you won’t handle prison very well...” Her voice trailed off, and a sad expression over took her face. “And I know that you can’t help it, because your Dad couldn’t help, it either.”

Colby looked shocked. Had Eileen just suggested that his father had been a problem gambler too?

“Regardless of that,” she regained her composure, “Some sort of justice must be served here, either in prison, or here, under my roof, so this is what I’m going to offer you...” Eileen reached under her desk to retrieve a garment bag and a shoebox.

“You stole from me because you thought I had enough to go around, you thought I had so much that I wouldn’t notice it missing, didn’t you?” She demanded.

Colby sighed and nodded. She had read the situation pretty accurately.

“You think what I do is easy?” she asked rhetorically, “You think that all of this just *happens?*” she motioned around the office with her arms. “You must think that all I do is walk around all day bossing people around and taking our customer’s money, huh?”

Colby noticed her face starting to get flush with anger. He kept his facial expressions to minimum and shook his head, ‘no.’

“Well, Colby,” she continued, “You’re about to find out. From now on, until your debt to me is repaid, in addition to your duties as my Chief Financial Officer, you’re also going to be my personal assistant. You’re going to spend the next few weeks, months, possibly years in *my* shoes, seeing what *I* do.”

She lifted the cover off the shoe box and tilted it towards her stepson. Colby gasped.

“Or I can call the police, right now,” she growled, “It’s your decision.”

Colby's eyes grew wide as he looked inside the box. Eileen then unzipped the garment bag for Colby to view the contents. Thankfully it wasn't what Colby had expected.

"Well?" Eileen asked impatiently, "What's going to be? Hard time in a state penitentiary? Or these?" she reached into the shoebox and held up a pair of bright pink platform pumps. Colby gulped as she swung the shoes back and forth tauntingly in front of him. "You've got ten seconds to decide, and then I'm calling the cops. This is the best offer you're going to get Son. No hard time, just high-heels."

Colby sighed and nodded. He imagined it very plainly in his mind. He was being given a choice – not a choice he thought was reasonable – but a choice. It was one or the other.

Eileen smiled and stood up from her desk. She walked around her office, closing the venetian blinds, then turned back to her stepson, "I'll give you a minute to get changed," she smiled wickedly, "Ron and I will be waiting out in the showroom. Oh, and take these papers with you." She pointed at the binder on the desk. "And then bring me back some coffee. Black. No crap in it. Straight black."

With that, she exited the office, leaving Colby with his thoughts... And his new pair of pink footwear. He pondered his Step-mother's offer. Prison would be right thing to do, but it wouldn't be the easiest. His first impulse was to just

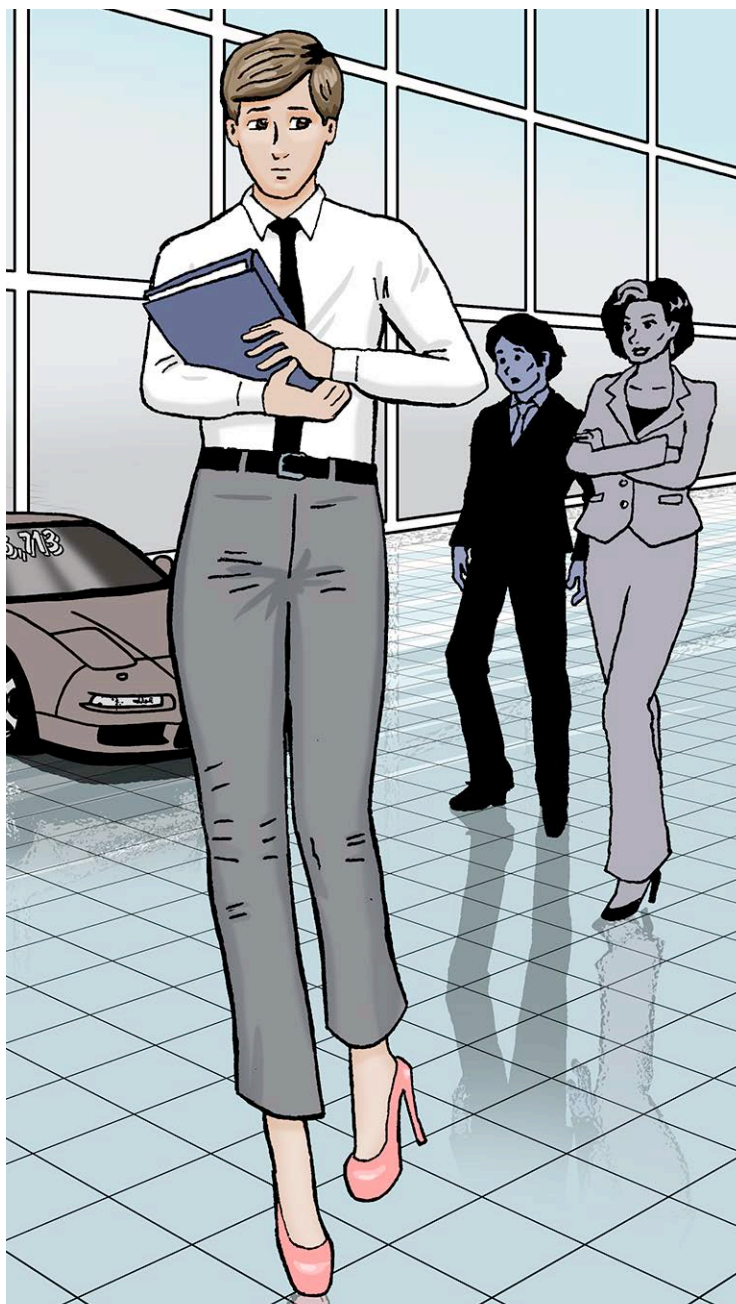


wear the silly pink shoes, and Colby had a *severe* impulse control problem. He lowered his head and groaned, hating himself for what he was about to do and slipped off his shoes.

A few minutes later, Colby emerged from Eileen's office, carefully clutching the binder as he haphazardly twisted and turned, clip-clopping noisily, as he attempted to walk in the ridiculously high heels across the showroom floor. He felt his face turn flush for a moment as he spotted Eileen and Ron across the room, watching him intently.

In addition to the heels, Eileen had supplied him with a number of new pants to wear in his new role as executive assistant. They were most obviously designed for women, being slender and snug in their fit, and ending just above his ankles. Colby was thankful that he wasn't a particularly hairy man, or his bare lower legs would have looked ridiculous.

He focused on his walking, taking slower wobbly steps, and tried to ignore the fact that he was be-



ing watched. Hopefully, if he complied with Eileen's demands, she would let her punishment end sooner than later, and he could go back to being her head accountant.

But he figured that wouldn't likely be the case.

She remembered all the times while he was growing up, that he had done something stupid, and how his Dad would usually let him off the hook, only to have Eileen step in and dish out a more severe punishment. This kind of humiliating act wasn't new to him. She had been forcing compliance through embarrassment for years.

He remembered the time he had stolen a candy-bar from the corner store only to have to return it to the shopkeeper that same day, with an apology letter, and full payment, and wear a hand-drawn sign that said 'I stole from this man, shame on me' inside the store, for an hour, next to the counter.

There was the bad report card that he had hidden from Eileen and Dad, forging his father's signature, that landed him a month of doing all the laundry, including hanging up his stepmother's underthings on a special clothesline that she had set up on the *front* lawn, where Colby had to sit in a lawn chair and watch clothes dry while the other neighborhood kids played on the street, taunting him.

Then there was the time that he had puked all over himself after a night of heavy drinking while in college, only to have Eileen lock him out of his room, forcing him to go to class the next day smelling of hard cider and vomit.

All of these incidents had been caused by his inability to control his impulses, and all of these incidents had resulted in his stepmother trying to humiliate him into making better decisions the next time.

It obviously hadn't worked.

Eileen was as strict a person as Colby had ever known, and she always got her way. So, as Colby tripped and stumbled his way to the file room, he thought to himself, *I should have seen this coming*. Even though he would happily trade his current punishment for a day of humiliation in a convenience store, or an afternoon beside a clothes line full of panties and bras being laughed at by his friends, or even spending the day in rancid smelling clothing, he knew that this was better than going to jail, so he better get used to it.



After watching her stepson stumble for most of the day in his new heels, Eileen suggested that a night of practicing would be in order, and gave him some links for online videos he could watch that would show the proper way to sashay in his new shoes.

"Do I really need to?" Colby complained, "These things are already killing my feet."

Eileen glared at him, "Do think that prison would be more comfortable?"

Colby sighed and headed for his car. He removed the heels to drive home. After dinner, he had brought up the suggested video on his tablet, and was now in the process of squeezing his swollen, partially blistered feet into the tight pink shoes.

He practiced with the video for over an hour, before he could bear no more. Every piece of his foot was in excruciating pain. He wondered how women could wear such tortuous things every single day?



The next morning, he didn't arrive quite as early as he should have. He was finding it very difficult to walk.

Eileen was already buzzing around the dealership, easily gliding in her heels as if they were cross-training sneakers. She looked at Colby with an unhappy expression when he entered the room, "You're late," she scowled.

"Sorry," he sighed, "It's these shoes... Are you sure there isn't another way we can do this?"

"Another way?" she scoffed, "Was there another way you could have repaid your mobster friend for all your gambling debts?"

Colby sighed again, this time louder. He knew she was right. He had stolen from her. She had caught him. She had offered him a punishment that didn't include prison or a criminal record.

He had no other options.

"I expect you here the moment I arrive," she informed him, "A proper assistant is available every moment of every day – am I understood?"

Colby sighed a third time and nodded. "Yes Ma'am."

Eileen smiled, "Ma'am... I like that. I think you should keep using it, whenever you're addressing me. Understood?"

Colby sighed so hard that his lips flapped. His punishment was not likely to get any easier. In fact, it was very likely going to be the opposite.

"Yes Ma'am," he said in a soft compliant tone.

"Excellent." Eileen smiled. "Now show me what you've been practicing all night," she pointed at his shoes.

Colby nodded in compliance and began to walk across the showroom floor. His stride was ridiculously exaggerated and slow, as he had learned to swing his hips with each mincing step, but he didn't stumble or trip up once.

He turned, with one hand on his hip, as the video had suggested for balance, and waited for Eileen's approval. At least he *hoped* it would be approval.

"Not bad," she said nodding her head, "but you still need more practice. I can't have an assistant walking around like some kind of silly drag queen, now can I? You need to be able to maneuver as well – or better – than any girl you've ever seen in heels."



“As well as you?” Colby asked.

“Better,” she replied, straight-faced, as she leaned forward onto the toes of her left foot, planting it solidly, then pivoting on it in a perfect half-circle. She then began to walk away, with Colby obviously watching how she walked.

“I’ve got a long way to go,” he muttered under his breath, “But at least I’m not going to jail.”

With that, he planted his right foot, then leaned forward, centering his body over it, before trying to pivot on it like he had just seen his stepmother do. The results were less than spectacular, as he quickly lost his balance and toppled over onto his rear, with a distinct thud.

“Keep practicing,” he heard Eileen call from her office, “And bring me coffee! Black! No crap in it!”

Colby exhaled in frustration and stood up. For a brief moment he wondered if prison would have been easier.

The rest of the day was spent doing his normal accounting functions whilst fetching coffee, filing files and copying copies for his stepmother. By days end, Colby’s feet felt bruised, swollen and blistered. He could barely walk himself to his car, even in the black dress shoes that he had changed into after everyone had left.

That night he stopped at the local pharmacy to buy some insoles for high-heels. He had seen the commercial on TV once, and figured that they would be the answer to his prayers. The girl at the checkout gave him a curious eye as she scanned the box and read him his total.

“They’re for my mom,” he blurted out, feeling his face turning flush red.

“Lucky her,” the girl muttered as she counted Colby’s money and completed the transaction.

Once home, he soaked his feet in warm water before slathering them in ointment and wrapping them in bandages. He’d try the insoles tomorrow – for tonight he was going to try and let his feet heal.



The next morning, a far more comfortable looking Colby was in the dealership the moment Eileen opened the doors. She commented on his punctuality, *and* how comfortable he looked in his shoes that morning.

He blushed and lost his train of thought, causing him to stumble instead of glide, like the online video had instructed him on how to do.

“Whoops,” Eileen chortled, “Spoke too soon.”

Colby didn’t reply. He just righted himself and continued on his way. He was already humiliated enough, in his pink platform heels and capri-styled ladies trousers. Stopping to let Eileen brow-beat him would have been too much to bear.

As his day continued, the insoles proved invaluable. His feet didn't hurt *nearly* as much as they had, and in fact, at some points during the days that followed, he even forgot he was wearing four-and-half inch stiletto heels.

That is, until he saw a strange look, or snicker, from a dealership employee or customer. Their low-chuckle or giggling grin instantly brought him back to reality. He was a full-grown man wearing narrow pink platform pumps and girl's pants. He did so because he had stolen from his stepmother. He had stolen from his stepmother because he didn't want to wear the 'concrete shoes' that Big Pete was likely to fit him with moments before throwing him into the river.

Yep, he was wearing heels at work because the thought of going to prison was worse.

Later that week, prison started to look good.

It started Thursday, when Eileen called him into her office. He could tell by her expression that she was not in a happy place. Shortly after she opened her mouth, he knew why.

"You lying little shit!" she exploded, "How much *more* did you steal from me?"

Colby looked shocked, then groaned and looked down. He figured his lenient punishment was about to end. He started listening for the sound of police sirens. He was mentally preparing himself to be led away in handcuffs, and four and a half inch pink platform heels.

He was pretty sure that his life was about to be over.

"Jesus, Colby!" she barked, "When were you going to tell me?"

"I..." he opened his mouth to answer, but she wasn't actually prepared to listen at this point. Instead, she reached into her desk and retrieved three odd-looking articles of clothing.

"Apparently, walking a mile in my shoes isn't going to be enough for you," she said as she handed him the unfamiliar garments. "So I've decided that if you're going to act like a silly fool, than you're going to *dress* like one." She paused to wait for his reaction. "Unless you'd rather go to prison..." She left the sentence open ended.

Colby took the new outfit from her and looked at them with an expression of disbelief. He felt panicked and grasped at his necktie to loosen it up and allow him to *not* pass out.

Eileen had handed him a pair of short ... *really short* ... black shorts, a pair of black tights, and pink necktie. It occurred to him that she intended for him to keep his white dress shirt, which would make him look like some kind of foolish cross-dresser wannabe.

"Well?" she scowled.

"Um..." he stammered, "I... guess..."

"Good." She smiled. "Because there'll be one for you to wear every day from now on. I'll have a bag for you to take home with changes of clothes for every day of the week. Now go get changed!" She pointed in the direction of the bathroom. Colby looked at the new garments with a shocked expression, but he

knew he didn't really have a choice.

He took a deep, sad breath and headed to the bathroom. There, he proceeded to remove his pants and shoes, and started to tug the tights up his legs like you would a pair of pants.

"No-no-no!" Eileen's voice startled him, "I figured you'd try to do that!"

She reached forward to grab the black opaque tights out of his grasp. "You'll ruin them if you do it that way, you need to roll them up like this," she said, as she began to form them into two black nylon 'donut' shapes. Colby watched carefully but absorbed nothing. He couldn't see the logic in rolling them up before you put them on. Eileen could read the expression on his face and proceeded to explain her stepson how delicate the material was, and how women had been rolling hosiery up their legs since the beginning of time, before she handed them back to him.

"Now, one leg at a time, point your toes into them, and gently *roll* them up your legs," she instructed. Colby followed her direction as best he could, handling the thick nylon like it was somehow made of glass, "Good lord, haven't you ever seen a girl put on tights before?" she scoffed.

Colby grunted indignantly and continued to slowly roll the stretchy material over his hairy legs.

