

***J O E   S I X   P A C K***

***SHE MADE  
ME INTO MY  
SISTER***

**“A Little Too Clever”  
A Teens Transformed Story**



2006 Paperback Edition

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## A LITTLE TOO CLEVER

Everything stopped. From the corner of my eye, I saw a blur. The first thing I heard was the loud, ear-shattering clang of the sheet metal. It sounded like a trash can struck with a baseball bat. What it turned out to be was my ex-girlfriend.

She had been thrown against the lockers that lined the hallways at my school, with the back of her head hitting first. Ashleigh then fell to the ground like a sack of dirt. I scanned the crowd, refocusing my sight to see what had precipitated this. I already had a good idea, and I was not wrong. It was Josh Farmer. He had a mean look on his sweaty, flushed face and turned to leave.

“You *asshole!*” Ashleigh cried from the ground.

That’s all I needed to see. Josh had slammed Ashleigh into the lockers for some reason, and his football physique had used every ounce of his animal strength to do it. There was even a dent left in the locker she had been thrown into. At that moment, I was convinced he had just broken a shoulder or something worse.

Then, for some stupid reason, I got in Josh’s way. Maybe it was instinct – at least I hope it was, because I’d hate to think I rationally decided to go up against the school’s human equivalent of the Incredible Hulk. Standing where I was, I made it so he was going to have to go through me to get away with this.

Which is exactly what he did, as he threw me – with one arm – back into the assembled crowd. Now back then, I wasn’t much of a wimp, as I played basketball and I was also on the wrestling team. But compared to Josh, I was just a leaf blowing in the wind.

And as I found my feet again, Josh turned around and had a second go at Ashleigh. He had barged back through the crowd and flipped her the bird.

“You’re fuckin’ *crazy* if you think I’m *fuckin’* gonna do what you *fuckin’* tell me to do!” He yelled. And with that bit of wisdom imparted, he left the hallway.

That was when I saw the streak of blood coming across Ashleigh’s forehead. That made me more angry than I’ve ever been in my life. Maybe anger is the wrong word. It was anger, fury, sickness and fear all at the same time. Josh hadn’t just hurt her, he had damaged her. He had made my Ashleigh bleed. I would have said and done anything to get back at Josh, and that’s how this all started. It was my anger that did this to me.

The first thing I did was to keep Ashleigh from getting up. She obviously had been hurt pretty badly, and the bleeding was starting to get ugly. I yelled at some other guys to go get the school nurse, and they scrambled off. Meanwhile, I stripped off my sweatshirt and bundled it up to apply to her forehead.

Ashleigh and I had gone out for almost two years, from when I was a freshman until the end of my sophomore year. We really were good together, and we liked each other a lot. And I’m not talking in terms of sex or anything. We just liked to spend time holding hands, going places and doing things. So after two years of non-stop togetherness, Ash kinda got burnt out with me. Technically, I had broken up with her, but that was only because I knew she was starting to see Josh. I didn’t want to have to wait for someone else figure it out



and make a big deal about it. I had already known she was drifting away from me anyway. And yeah, despite all that, I still loved her.

“Lemme up,” Ashleigh said, trying to get a foot under her. I just held her down and kept her from moving. She was hurt.

“Just wait for the nurse.” I told her. And when she looked into my eyes to see if I was serious, that bond of trust we had between us flickered to life again for a brief moment. She stayed put, completely putting herself in my hands. I missed her so bad.

It wasn’t more than a minute before the nurse showed up, bringing with her a few teachers and the vice principal. I was pushed aside as the hallway was cleared, and sent on my way to class. I don’t remember much else about that day. I don’t know how I made it through classes with all that rage flowing through me.



I do remember sitting in my Calculus class and watching out the window as an ambulance pulled up to the side of the school. I wanted to bolt from the room and run outside, to be there. But I just had to wait, and keep my seat.

Revenge fantasies consumed me. I wanted to tear Josh to shreds. I stewed in my own feverish dreams of annihilating him. Burning him. Shooting him. Skewering him. Running him down in a car. Any way to kill him in the most gruesome, painful, public way I could imagine.

When the bell rang, I went straight home, blowing off my friends. I was really far too wound up to be social. I wanted to lock myself in my room and just work things out on my own.

"Hey, *freak!*" My sister, Bailee, yelled at me when I stepped in the door. She was nibbling on a mint chocolate chip cookie, her favorite. "Mom wants you to clean up your room!" I didn't much like my sister. She was a year younger than me and always took every chance she could to make sure I was kept miserable. "And your old *loser* girlfriend called." She added.

I was a little shocked. Ashleigh had told me explicitly to stay out of her life. But maybe something had changed. Maybe she had come to her senses when I was there for her. I ran right up to my room and grabbed the phone.

"Ashleigh?" I said when she picked up. "Are you okay?"

"Can you come over, Wyatt?" She said.

I don't remember if it took me more than a few seconds to run halfway across town to get to her place. What I do remember was that by the time I had gotten there, Ashleigh's parents didn't want me inside. They didn't want anyone to talk to her, and thought I was part of the problem – what with me being a guy and all. I begged and pleaded, but there was no convincing them. I just had to leave.

"How's your old girlfriend? Still *fat*?" Bailee said, as I returned to my house. She had no idea just how far her snobbery was pushing me. I just wanted to throw my fist right through her perfect face.

I just went back up to my room, fighting the impulses running through me, the ones that were begging me to release that anger on anyone and everyone.



After a minute, the phone rang and I grabbed it halfway through the first ring.

"Ash?" I said.

"Sorry, Wyatt. My parents are on the warpath." Ashleigh said, apologizing to me. I felt like an ass for even feeling like she needed to be sorry for me. Not now.

"Whatever. I don't care. Are you okay?"

"I'll be okay." She said. "There wasn't anything serious to worry about. I had a few stitches in my scalp. Nothing big."

"Stitches!?" I screamed into the phone. "That fuckin' prick!" I was gritting my teeth so hard, my molars could have cracked in half.

"Listen, I need to talk to you. I'll be back at school tomorrow. Can we meet up?"

I was there a half hour early. The grass was still wet as I waited behind the old boiler room for her to arrive. When Ashleigh finally got there, she looked bet-

ter than I expected. She looked perfectly normal, except for the addition of a baseball cap on her head.

"Stitches." She said, pointing to the hat. "They had to cut some of the hair away."

"You're okay, though, right?" I asked.

She made a good show of putting on a smile, but she really couldn't fool me. I knew it had hurt her, down deep inside. "I'm fine," she claimed.

"Is there anything I can do?" I said. It struck me funny that I was sounding so mature about the whole thing. I didn't feel very mature. I just wanted to go hit someone.

"I was hoping you could help me."

"Anything, you know that."

"I... I want to get back at Josh." She said. "He..."

"What do you want me to do." I said, not even waiting for the explanation.

"I'll do anything to get him."

"Well..." Ashleigh had a look of fear on her face. "I have an idea. I thought that maybe you... If you really want to help... I mean, if you're as angry as I am..." She was starting to blubber. She was definitely a little unstable, emotionally. "Remember when... I was just hoping that you... Since you live with her and all... I mean it's kinda weird..."

"Take a breath." I said, holding her by the shoulders. "I'll do everything I can. Just tell me what you want to do."

She regained her composure and brushed her hair back behind her ears.

"Okay. Sorry." She then took a moment to think out what she was going to say.

"The reason Josh and I were having a fight. I know he's been going out behind my back. He's been seeing girls. I've known that for a long time."

"Most of the school does." I added.

She looked at me with a brief look of shock, but it passed. "I guess it wasn't a secret then. But it came down at Todd's party at the quarry last week. That was when I caught him in the act."

"I'm sorry." I said, thinking it was the right thing to say.

"It was... He was... He was making out with your sister."

I guess she thought I'd be surprised, but I knew my sister Bailee's reputation pretty well. She was always bringing home a new guy every time she went out.

"Yeah, I thought she was seeing him." I answered. Of course, I thought she was seeing anyone with a pulse and a wallet. And I was probably right.

"So I told him to stop being so selfish. I told him I could be everything in his life if he just let me. Whatever he wanted in a girl, I could be that for him." She sighed, heavily. "And he told me that if he wanted to screw other girls, he'd do it anyway, no matter what I wanted."

I winced at hearing this. It was so cruel. How could anybody have said this to her? To *my* Ashleigh?

She was just staring at the ground, now, lost in her own misery. "And that's when I told him to stop or I'd leave – and tell everyone why. He laughed, he dared me to do it, and then he threw me into the lockers."

A long silence passed as I digested it.

"My sister's a *whore*." I told her to make her feel better. Ash smiled weakly for a moment.

"She's also now Josh's new girlfriend." Ashleigh said. "Which makes her the most popular girl in school." She said with bitterness.

I always suspected that's why Ashleigh had left me for Josh. She wanted the popularity and the attention. She was a very pretty girl, and for Josh to want to make her his girlfriend wasn't a surprise. What always bothered me was why Ash had hooked up with him. She just liked being the focus of the school, I guess.

And Ashleigh wasn't wrong by saying my sister would now take her place. Bailee was easily the most beautiful girl in school. She worked hard at it, too. She shopped every damn day and was always dieting and working on her hair. Yeah, I mean she hated me and I hated her, but she was still a hot babe.

I honestly think she was pretty enough to be a model or an actress. I mean, Bailee being thin and blond, has an angelic face and is filled out in all the right places. All the boys drool and the girls are envious. She's a bombshell.

"So, I got a stupid idea." Ashleigh said. "You want to hurt Josh and I want to hurt Josh."

"Yes. More than anything."

"But, I was thinking..." She started to study the palm of her hand. "If we y'know, went after him, he's just too big to hurt... physically."

"Yeah. Even if we could break some bones, he'd just heal. Unless you're thinking... something more... permanent?"

"No!" Ashleigh said, surprised that I'd even suggest it. "No. I mean, sure, I want him to die, but not, like die *for real*."

"Yeah." I agreed, hesitantly.

"I was just thinking that he's such a big shot, always walking around campus like he owns the place. He's just a big guy who can push people around because they're afraid of him."

"He's the size of a house," I pointed out. He was already being scouted by big colleges. At six foot five and over two hundred and eighty pounds, he was already assured of a scholarship in football.

"Even someone like him can be made into some pip-squeak if we do it right." She looked me in the eyes for the first time that morning. "His reputation has to be ruined so badly no one even wants to talk to him again. I want him *radioactive*."

"Cool. What do you want to do?"

"I think I should set him up. Here's what I was thinking. I make up with him, lure him to a motel room or something, then get a camera and some gay guys..."

"Make up with him!?" I yelled. "He's just gonna hit you again!"

"As long as I can take him down a peg, I don't care."

"No!" I objected. "No way are you doing that. I'll go to your parents. I'll go to the school. I'm not going to let you do that!"

Ashleigh countered. "We need to trap him. I'm the bait."

"If you try and go out with him again, he won't even think twice about beating you even worse!"

"But you agree we've got to take him down, right?"

"Yeah, absolutely."

"We have to make him pay!"

"Pay *big time*."

"So, we need to do this!"

"I'm not going to let you put yourself in danger. It's not going to happen."

"Then what are we gonna do, Wyatt? We can't let him just walk away from this."

"I don't know."

Ashleigh then got a funny smirk on her face. "You could do it."

"Do what?"

"You could make him pay and humiliate him into shame no one could ever recover from if you pretended to be a girl and then we'd destroy his whole conceited, jock life!"

"Humiliate, him, yeah!" I said, and then almost comically stopping when I realized what she had said. "But..."

"If it's the only way, it's the only way, Wyatt! You can lure him into our trap!" She then hugged me close and kissed me on the cheek. "Say you'll help me, Wyatt!"

All she needed to do was touch me. I loved her so much. I guess I must have said yes or something. As to what I had agreed to, I wasn't even thinking about that. Obviously.

"Okay, here's what we do." Ashleigh said, checking her watch. "After school, we'll meet at my place. I've got this all planned. My parents will be out. See you then!" She said, before leaving for her locker. She did turn and wave at me with that smile on her face that I still saw in my dreams.

I didn't actually think about what I had just promised to do until the fourth period. What was I, *insane*? Or was Ashleigh? By the time I was on the way to Ashleigh's house after school, I knew I had to get out of this. I had already thought of a sly way of getting out of my promise.

That went down the tubes the second I went into her room. "Okay, strip down to your underwear," She said to me. Whatever was on my mind evaporated in an instant.

"What?"

"Strip!" She said again. A pretty girl doesn't have to tell me twice to strip, so I took off everything except my underwear. Ashleigh then stood directly in front of me and gave a good look over. "I want to see what I have to work with."

"You could tell me that I'm just too big a stud to be ever mistaken for my sister and we could move on," I said, half-kidding.

Ashleigh just grinned at the suggestion. "You're about an inch taller than Bailee, but I don't think anyone would really notice that." She then started to stare at the rest of my body. "Weight loss, okay. What do you weigh?"

"155." I said. Ash looked at me skeptically. "Maybe 145." I revised.

"This Hollywood diet thing I found on the internet says it can take 15 pounds off in a week. If we take three weeks, we can have you down to Bailee's weight easy." She put some jugs of some tangerine-colored liquid and some boxes of dehydrated food by the door. "You take this stuff home when you leave, and don't eat anything else, okay?"

"Okay." I answered. There was no way I believed that was going to work, anyway.

"Great. Next thing is your hair." She said. "We've got to get rid of all the stuff on your arms, legs and face."



I didn't have much of a beard, but it was looking promising for the future. Heck, I was only seventeen, anyway. So Ashleigh gave me a couple of razors and showed me the way to the bathroom.

"Get it all," she said, "and then use this." She handed me a tube of cream labeled 'Vaniqa.' "This will keep the re-growth down to a minimum. I can get you more tomorrow."

Ashleigh then closed the door behind me and stayed in her room. "Run the bath with the stuff on the sink after you're done!" She shouted. On the sink was a container of bath beads. I never had quite understood what those were for, but I used them.

After about an hour, (forty minutes with the razors, ten in the bath, ten more to work up the courage to open the door as a hairless pink fool) I was ready for what Ashleigh had planned next for me.

"Okay." She said, upon seeing me. "I've got everything ready for the next step. First, you can wear this."

And with that, she handed me a corset. It was red, with some sort of boning in it to make it incredibly restrictive and stiff. I wrapped it halfway around my waist and asked where the other half was.

"That's the whole thing," she said, much to my disbelief. But ten minutes later, after she had tied the two ends together behind my back, I wasn't so much as amazed as I was writhing in agony.

"What..." I had to take a breath. "How..." Another breath. "Am..." Breath. "I..."

Ashleigh rolled her eyes in impatience. "Look, it will just take a few minutes to get used to. Okay? Take short breaths and don't get all panicky. You'll just need to draw more oxygen that way."

She then hoisted out something that looked like she dressed dolls in. It was pink, flimsy and tiny. "What..." Breath. "Is..." Breath. "That?"

"It's a leotard. Put it on so we can do your exercises." She answered.

"Exercises? In..." Breath. Cough. Wheeze. "In this stupid thing?"

"If we don't get you toned and built up, you'll never be able to trick Josh."

Ashleigh said, making sure I didn't lose track of the goal.

"Josh." I said to myself. "Show me what I have to do." I pulled the leotard on over my body.

"We've got to develop the legs and buttocks, while leaving everything else to become atrophied." She got her chair and started to bend her legs backward.

"I'll show you leg curls, crunches, step exercises and some Pilates."

"Sounds like fun," I mumbled.

"Don't be such a grumpus." She went through the entire routine and had me repeat it. It took about an hour. She watched me do it myself once, and the told me to do it every day for one hour before I went to bed. And most important, she said, not to do any other exercises at all. Reluctantly, I agreed. All I had to do was think of Josh tossing her across the hallway and I could agree to just about anything.

Whenever I tried to bend over, which was physically impossible because of the corset, Ashleigh just sighed. She didn't seem particularly impressed with the pain I was going through. "You have no idea the sort of discomfort girls go through just to look nice." She told me, indignantly.

"So, you wear a boned corset?" I asked her.

"Don't be silly." She replied.

Since we were done with this, I flopped down on her bed and took some deep breaths. Or at least I tried to. "Can we just watch some TV or something? I'm wiped."

"Sure, Hercules." Ashleigh said. She zapped on her set with the remote.

"I suppose I have to watch girly shows and soap operas now. I'll have to join Oprah's book club." I said, mockingly.

"Wyatt, you don't have to do anything you don't want to." She was serious all of the sudden. "I don't want you to do this unless you're a hundred percent into it. It's just going to get harder from here on out."

I had to make sure she didn't think I was wussing out. I really, really wanted to help her and get that asswipe Josh. And what was the worst that could happen? I took the remote from her and started flipping channels. "You get the Lifetime network on here, right? If there's a disease of the week movie, I'm wathcin' it."

"That's my guy." Ashleigh said. "Now sit straight up and don't slouch. Keep your knees together and your eyes straight forward."

I just sighed and did as she said.

There actually *was* a movie on, and we caught the last half hour. It was something about a woman being raped and looking for revenge by ruining the guy's life. It seemed oddly appropriate for the evening. I got my jeans and T-shirt back on over the leotard, because, well, because I didn't want to undress again. And the leotard over my hairless body was kinda weird feeling. Weird... but... interesting.

Once the movie was over, she flipped off the set and tossed the remote. "Time to teach you how to walk." She said, grabbing a pair of her high heels.

She handed them to me and I remember taking them like they were going to attack. "You want me to wear these?" I said.

"No, I want you to fry them up with butter and eat them," she said with a smirk. "See if they fit."

I grit my teeth and pulled my socks off. I slid my foot into the pump pushing with all my might. "You don't need these anymore, do you? I might just ruin them."

"Consider them a gift." Ashleigh replied. "Just what every boy needs. Do they fit?"

I got my heel tucked into the back of the shoe, but it felt like I had to fold my foot in half to do it. "Not really." I said.

"Then they fit like they do for every woman. They're perfect."

She had me stand up and pace back and forth several times, giving me some aching feet. My calves were working themselves into knots.

"Okay. So. Yeah." She said, on evaluating my walk. "Let's forget everything you know about walking. For heels, you have to walk almost on your tip-toes, take shorter steps, swivel your hips and let your arms float by your side."

I looked at her like she was insane.

"Um, we'll take it step by step over the next few days. We have three weeks." She said.

"Why three weeks?" I asked.

"That's when the prom is." She replied, like I should have already figured that part out by myself. "Let's do something else before we run out of time."

"Yeah, I don't want to waste any more time in making me a girl." I said, sarcastically.

Ashleigh shot me an angry stare.

I tried to laugh. "Sorry, no complaining, I remember."

"I want you to sit down at my makeup table," she said, pointing to it. "I'm going to show you how to make yourself all pretty, Wyatt."

I couldn't help but groan. But I sat down on the little padded stool, before a gilded mirror and a thousand little bottles and tubes.

"Oh, before I forget, chew this." Ashleigh said, handing me a small bottle.

"Bust-Up Gum?" I said, reading the label.

"It's Japanese. It'll make breasts bigger and fuller."

"I don't have breasts." I pointed out to her.

"That's why you need the gum – *duh!*"

I looked at the bottle and couldn't find anything that reassured me that it was in any way safe. "What if I don't want breasts?"

"You do for the next few weeks, so take it. It's gotta wear off after time, don't you think?"

I opened the bottle and chewed on a piece. "It probably doesn't work, anyway." I told her.

"Probably not, but it can't hurt." She then picked up a tube. "Pucker up."

I did, and she applied a clearish gel to my lips. It felt funny. Kind of cold and tingling at the same time. "What's this?" I asked.

"It's for your lips. Hydro-something. It makes them puffier by swelling them up a little. Wait like a minute or two and check it out." Then she picked up another container of something and started to dab it over my face with a piece of sponge. "Foundation first." She said, explaining it to me.

"Is this gonna be on the test?" I quipped.

"Yes." She replied. "Concealer." She showed it to me to remember it. She dabbed a little of that in the corner of my eyes with a tiny brush. She picked up a larger brush and started to go into my eyes with it. "Powder."

"Next, eyeshadow." She looked amongst her things for something she needed.

I gave myself a quick examination in the mirror. "Hey my lips!"

"See, it's kinda cool, huh?" Ashleigh smiled.

Looking in the mirror, my thinnish lips had puffed out fuller and thicker, just like she promised. "Weird." I said.

"Keep your eyes open and don't blink." She told me. "Stare up at the ceiling. I have to do the eye liner and mascara."

So I did what she told me and kept my eyes open and looking upwards. From my point of view, a large spider attached to a stick was being wiped along my eyelashes. "Ow!" I said, as it went into my eyeball. "Watch it!"

"Sorry." She apologized. "It's hard to do this on someone else."

"Be careful. That hurts." I looked in the mirror and saw a thick coating on each eye. "isn't that enough?"

"No." She answered. "Your sister likes it stripper thick." And then she spent another two minutes on the lashes. "I'm finished." She patted me on the shoulder. "Now, I'm going to pluck out some strays on your eyebrows."

"Pluck?" I asked, not sure what she meant by that.

"With tweezers." She replied. She then went to my eyebrows, and *yanked a hair out by the root!*

“Yagh!!” I screamed. “What was that for!?”

“I’m plucking your eyebrows into shape.” She said, “Like I said.”

“That doesn’t mean you have to pull them out of my head!”

“Yes it does!” She took the next few minutes and proceeded to pluck dozens more. It got easier as she did more, fortunately. “Okay, a little blush...” She said, grabbing another large blush and going over my cheeks. “And then the lips.” I puckered up again and she applied a glossy pink goop to my lips. “And teenage tramps like a little glitter, don’t they?” She then took another brush and put some glittery stuff on my temples.

“Are we done?” I asked.



It took her a moment to decide. "Okay, have a look, Peaches." Ashleigh said, pointing me back to the mirror. I had been avoiding it, fearful of the results. "Shit!" I yelled. "Holy shit!" I looked a lot like my sister. With the makeup on, I didn't just look "kinda" like her or "sorta" like her, I was unmistakably her. I had the same features. The high cheekbones, the little button nose, the big, innocent eyes and the smooth, creamy skin. I had always hated that boyish look about me, but now it became clear to me exactly why I hated it. I looked like a girl.

"Okay, open your eyes for a sec. I wanna put in contacts." Ashleigh told me. She took out a small case and sprayed some liquid in it. "Tilt your head back." She then put in some lenses. "I got these for myself a few years ago, but chickened out."

As I tried to blink my way back to seeing straight, Ashleigh stopped me from using my hands to rub my eyes. "You're going to ruin your makeup." She told me.

So as I sat there, trying to get the world back into focus, she put something on my head. "And this wig is the final touch."

So when my eyes finally started to work right again, I was even more frightened and shocked by what was in the mirror. It was my sister. Bailee was sitting where I was. It was her face, her lips, her eyes. Her blue eyes. And it was her hair. Her blond, straight hair. The reflection was Bailee, through and through.

I was afraid to talk, fearful that it was her voice that was going to come from my throat. "Shiiiiit," I whispered.

"I knew this was gonna work!" Ashleigh said, excited. "You know, we could just have you pretend to be Bailee. It's that close. What do you think?"

"Huh?" Was what I think I said. I was a little out of it.

"Okay, we have a lot more work to do." She then looked at the clock. "My folks are coming back in a few minutes. You better get cleaned up and head home," she said, dejectedly.

"I better." I said.

Ashleigh went to town on my face with some cream and a wet towel and we got everything off. She whipped the wig off and threw it in her closet, and I took the contacts out. I slipped out of the leotard and tossed it away. Then I had to deal with the corset. I reached around back for the straps and couldn't reach. "A little help?" I asked.

"No, don't take that off!" She said. "You need to keep that on for the next few weeks!"

"What!?" I cried. "Weeks?"

She put her hand on my shoulder and looked at me with those dumb big eyes of hers. "I can only do this with your help, Wyatt."

I grumbled under my breath, remembering that this was something I volunteered for. "I'll make up an excuse to get out of P.E., I guess." I answered, putting my T-shirt back on, over the corset.

She kissed me on the cheek. "Be back here tomorrow. I'll just tell my parents we're working on a project for school. Which is kinda true, I guess."

And then I gathered up my stuff, put my trainers on and left. At the time, I didn't even think of how Ash had assembled all of this stuff so quickly. Looking back, I should have been more suspicious, I guess.

Walking home in the dark, I was still in a bit of pain, and frikin' sore, but when I remembered why, I knew it was for the best.



When I got up the next morning, I felt like I had been beaten around the body with a two by four. But I didn't mind. When I got down to breakfast, I had already poured my bowl of cereal out before I remembered the diet. So instead, I poured a glass full of that strange diet juice for myself. Tasted like raw eggs and lemons. It was awful.

"Hollywood Juice Diet?" Bailee said to me as she passed by on the way out. "You weigh, like, one hundred and *nothing* pounds and you're on a diet? Oh my God, you are *such* a freak."

"Leave me alone." I replied. It was early. I wasn't up for insults for another hour yet. "Don't you have someone to do? I mean, something to do."

"Yeah, good comeback." She grabbed a tangerine from the fruit bowl on the table. "Har har har. It was so funny I forgot to laugh." Fortunately, that was the limit of our exchange as a car horn beckoned, causing her to skitter on out of the house. I wouldn't have been able to take much more of her razor sharp wit.

I decided it was probably a good idea to wear a button-down shirt to try and cover up anything that showed I had a corset under my t-shirt. And I fashioned a note for my P.E. teacher that said I was under a doctor's care and couldn't participate in class. I actually got my mom to sign it. I caught her as she was heading out the door, talking to one of her real estate clients on her cell phone.

She was far too distracted to even notice what it was. As usual.

When school started, I just tried to avoid Josh. Well, I always was avoiding Josh. It was a survival skill. Most everyone who knew what was good for them did the same. He was huge and had a hair trigger.

I did see in the hallway that he had my sister on his arm, just like Ash had predicted. It didn't take my sister long to move in, did it? Of course, this time, I didn't mind if she got swatted around. Just a little. Well, maybe 'swatted' is a bit harsh.

Lunch was a thermos of that juice drink, which I choked down. After that, I tried to meet up with Ashleigh. She brushed me off, and ignored me. At first, I thought maybe she was angry with me or something. But when I tried to ask her about it, between fifth and sixth periods, she just whispered "keeping up appearances. I don't want anyone getting suspicious."

I thought that was overkill, but I went along with it. After all, it was my ass in a sling if we did get found out.





We met at her house after school, just as we planned to do for about every day from now until we sprung the trap. "Welcome to Miss Ashleigh's Ladies Finishing School for Wyatts." She said to me when I got to her front door.

We walked right past her mom who gave me the evil eye. I knew her parents didn't trust anyone after what had just happened to their daughter. I don't know what she told them to convince them I was okay. And not only okay, but okay enough to be left alone for hours with her every night. But then again, Ash was pretty convincing when she wanted to be.

She immediately put me through the routine of doing my face, and I was trying to remember what she had done the previous night, step for step. It took me nearly two hours, but I eventually got it close enough for her to be satisfied. She had me do the contacts and the wig as well. It was pretty strange being my sister from the neck up. I mean, I pretty much looked exactly like her.

After that, she gave me my heels and I tried to walk in them a little. The first thing she had me do was adjust the way I was shifting my weight. Ash wanted me to put the weight on the balls of my feet, and not the heels. Which was a good idea, as whenever I tried to land on the heel, I twisted my ankle.

"I want you to use these every night." She said, giving me two large, oversized boots. "Sleep in them."

I examined them. "What are they?"

"They keep your feet pointed while you sleep. Over a few days, they'll stretch out your Achilles tendon and make it easier to stand in high heels."

"Great!" I replied. My feet were killing me. Any help I could get was much needed. "I'll use them tonight!" Finally, some relief, thank God.

"So, I was thinking..." Ashleigh said, a little impishly. "Since we've established that Josh goes for girls who look, act and behave like your sister, I think we should use her as a template for you."

"I can't argue with that." I answered. No, I didn't particularly want to act like my stupid sister, but she was a really hot chick that guys like Josh couldn't keep their hands off of. And if I wanted to get this done and over with, the only chance I had was to make myself as irresistible as possible.

"Today, the new thing is gonna be your voice." Ashleigh announced. "We need to get you talking kinda chirpy... Kinda like your sister."

"Ohmigawd, Ashleigh, like, my sister has a really, really, reeeeeeally weird way of taking n' stuff, y'know?" I said. Hey, I had lived with her all my life. I certainly had picked up on how she talked.

She burst out laughing. "Okay, so you know what to say, but we've got to work on how you say it."

"This where I have to make my voice higher, like Bailee's, right?" I asked.

"Yep." She confirmed. "You're not going to try and get out of it, are you?"

"No, I was just waiting. I knew it was coming sooner or later."

"Okay, so, here's a recording of your sister doing her social studies oral presentation. I downloaded it off the school website." She then clicked the mouse on her computer and it started playing.

Bailee's voice came from the computer. "Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson had totally different visions for America. Hamilton wanted an industrial society while Jefferson dre..." She stopped the recording.

"Okay, now you." Ashleigh said to me. "Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson had totally different visions for America."

I cleared my throat. "Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson had, like, totally, totally different visions for America, n' stuff. Even if they were, like, *freaks*."

Ashleigh giggled. "You already sound a lot like her," she said, not realizing it was an insult. "We'll have you talking like her in no time."

Was this good news?

Soon enough, we were done for the night, but I was assigned some reading from *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue* and *Elle* to get up to date on fashions and things. I had no idea where I was going to hide these magazines from my prying parents.

At home, I had my juice drink, ate my dehydrated dinner, and did my exercises. I read the magazines as I went to sleep, remembering to put my feet into the tendon-stretching boots. I locked my door to make sure no one would find me like this. Hopefully the house wouldn't catch fire tonight.



Getting up in the morning, I felt a lot better than I had yesterday. Still sore, but not so much. At least, until I got out of bed. Only then did I remember about the boots and I fell over head first onto the floor. A great way to start the day. I took off the boots and hid them away with the magazines and the rest of the stuff Ashleigh had given me.

As I got around to taking my shower, I saw Bailee arrive. She did this more and more lately. She was hanging around with a fast crowd, and I wouldn't be surprised if she were taking drugs or something. It was six thirty in the morning, and she was just getting in from being out all night. Maybe my Mom or Dad would "talk" to her about it, but she always seemed to get away with anything. Me, if I was ten minutes past ten getting home, I was answering a hundred questions and threatened with a grounding. While all Bailee had to say was that she was "sorry" and "it would never happen again." Twenty minutes later, she had changed and was out the door, meeting Josh in the driveway for a ride.

I had the juice thing for breakfast, and I





was off to school myself. It was sometime that day when I realized that the corset wasn't really bothering me that much anymore. Which was great, because that meant that I could stop wearing it.

"Hey, I think I can take this off now." I told Ashleigh when we met at her place. "It's almost loose."

"Yeah, we should take it off." She agreed. "But I just want to wash it. It smells pretty ripe."

"I need to put it back on?" I growled.

"How thick is your sister's waist?" She asked.

"I dunno. Yay big." I said, making an imaginary circle with my hands.

She then pointed to me. "So, how big is yours?"

I used my hands to compare the circle I had made with my midsection. "It's close enough," I decided.

"Close is gonna get us found out. It has to be perfect!" She demanded.

"Yeah, but how do we know when it's perfect? I say it's pretty close."

"I think you have a way to go."

"That's my point, how do we know?"

"Why don't you get a pair of her jeans? Just grab a pair from the laundry and see if you fit into them. When you can, we'll know when to stop."

I blew some air out of my lungs. "Sounds fair."

"Meanwhile, we can get this thing clean." She said, pulling up my shirt to get to the corset. She undid it, letting my midsection breathe for the first time in days. Surprisingly to me, it didn't really seem to want to. It kept its shape, which was strange. My sides pinched inwards, just like a girl's would. And my jeans had a few inches of slack. They were 30-inch waist pants. So while Ashleigh took the corset out of the room to go clean it, I undid the buckle on my pants and pulled it tight around my waist. It had three inches of overlap. I measured twenty-seven inches there.

I stepped onto Ashleigh's scale in her bathroom and saw I weighed one hundred and thirty one pounds. I had already lost five or six pounds in three days. Which was pretty good, I thought. My stomach was growling at me every day, but I could live with that for a while – this would be over before it drove me nuts.

Without wanting to wait for her, I just went ahead and did my own makeup for the night. It took me about forty-five minutes, and I had to start over at one point, but I think I was beginning to catch on.

When Ashleigh came back, she had a mischievous look on her face and was hiding something behind her back. "Every girl grows up, Wyatt." She said to me. "And maturity is something every girl craves at a certain age. The need to be a woman, a real woman. And there's one thing above all others that they want. Most have to wait for mother nature. But today, Wyatt, I give you the gift that mother nature can't give you."

"Are you filming this, or something?" I asked. She was making quite a production of this, whatever it was.

"Today, Wyatt, you are a woman. I give you... your breasts." She said, producing a white shoe-box. She opened it up, and removed some tissue paper. It revealed a pair of women's breasts, as if they had just been plucked off some poor girl somewhere.

“What the hell? Where did you...” I then put those questions aside for a more important one. “Do you mean I have to wear these?”



"Wyatt, don't think of them as something you wear, think of them as your two new best friends." She smiled wide. "Because you're going to get to know each other real well over the next few weeks."

I didn't object. I was wondering exactly when we'd get to this point, it only seemed obvious that I was going to have to fake some breasts, so I just shrugged and did it. Ashleigh said she'd got some glue that I could use when we finally sprung the trap on Josh, but for now, I'd just wear them in a bra during our training sessions. Which is what I did.

It changed my center of gravity a bit, and my balance was way off when I tried the heels again. Just simple things like bending over were a new adventure as my fake chest had it's own agenda on where it was going and when it would stop moving. I was a long way from getting used to these things.

When I got home that night, and soaked in the bubble bath, I just started to laugh. How had I gotten myself here? It was pretty silly when you thought about it. But, all things considered, it was a labor of love. Not only to crush Josh but to be that close to Ashleigh. I had good thoughts that night as I did my exercises, read my mags and fit my feet in the special boots. I didn't even mind the corset, which was now even tighter around my waist.



As I rubbed the sleep from my eyes the next day, I finally remembered to take the boots off before I got out of bed. What was kinda weird was how my feet now just seemed to "relax" in a different position. They wanted to point down. In fact, it was a little uncomfortable to walk around with my feet flat, like normal. I guess that meant it was be working.

I snuck down to the laundry room and grabbed a pair of my sister's jeans, just like Ashleigh suggested. I tried to slip into them, but couldn't really do it. Forget the waist, I couldn't even get my legs into them.

Obviously, I still had a ways to go. My legs were too thick. I was probably going to need to lose all the weight I could, just like Ashleigh said. Looking at myself in the mirror, I thought I already looked skinny, but I guess I wasn't thin enough.

I had lunch at school with my bud, Derek. I had been kind of avoiding him the past few days. Kinda because I was mortified to be doing what I was doing, but also because I didn't want anyone too close to me right now.

"Hey, want my pork chops? I ain't gonna eat 'em." He said to me.

I just scoffed at them. "Do you know how many *calories* those are?"

"So, what's the deal?" He said, his eyebrows twisted in confusion.

"Deal?" I replied.

"Yeah, are you on some sort of diet or somethin'?"

"Um..."

"You look like you're getting thinner."

"I'm just trying to eat healthier."

"And you've shaved all the hair off your arms."

I could feel a bead of sweat drip down my forehead. "I... I'm trying to make weight for wrestling." I said. I quickly realized that didn't explain the shaving.

"Or swimming. I'm thinking about going out for the swim team, too."

"That's not until next year."

"Wanted to start early."

"And you know you're walking like a fag."

I'm sure my face went white. "Uh, what do you mean?"

"When you walk, your hips swish back and forth like a girl's." He took a bite of his sandwich. "You have a sexier walk than your sister does."

"It's a limp." I said. I was going to have to watch that.

"And where've you been lately? I haven't seen you in days."

I really had to think. I hated to lie to my friends, but they were bound to get suspicious, if they weren't already. "I've been grounded." I told him. "Dad caught me drinking."

"Oh, *dude!*" Derek said, slapping on my back. "Rough break!"

I went back to my thermos of juice stuff and tried to keep to myself for a while. "So what are you guys doing, turning yourselves into your sister? Yeah, I'm doing that, too!" I wasn't much for conversation right now.

"So, Eddie and maybe Rick are going out to the car show down at the fairgrounds tonight. I told 'em you could drive, but your Escort's in rough shape..."

"Actually, I can't go." I said, knowing this was going to be a problem. "I have to do some work tonight. I have a project. A school project. Gonna have to work on it late tonight." I probably should have said that with more conviction and looked Derek in the eyes, but I didn't.

"You're not *going?*" Derek said with surprise. "You're telling me you're not going." He rolled up his brown paper bag and crushed it into a ball. "Well that's just fuckin' great." Without looking back, he got up from the table and left the lunchroom. He dunked his bag in the trash can hard. He was really ticked off.

I could hear my stomach growl in anger as I finished that measly little juice drink.



The days started to blend together after that. I'd show up after school every day for my special "training." I went pretty much through a regular routine. I had to do my face, practice my voice, walk in the heels and work on my hair and nails. Every day, Ash would have a new "focus" for me to work on. Sometimes it would be vocabulary, sometimes it would be fashion, maybe music and other stuff. But as time went on, she was getting more and more specific about things.

"Today," she announced one day, "we're going to work on your friends."

"What have my friends got to do with anything?" I asked.

Ashleigh looked cross. "No, I mean your *new* friends."

Then I figured out where she was going with this. "Bailee's friends." I corrected.

"*Your* friends. Think of them as *your* friends." She got out the yearbook, and showed me their pictures. "You not only have to know who they are, but you have to get to know what's going on in their shallow little lives."

"Okay..." I said, trying to understand what she was saying, but failing.

"I bought this little device at Sharper Image. It taps a cell phone line, and you can listen into all their conversations."



"Look, Ashleigh, is this really necessary?" I had to know exactly why I was doing all this. "I'm only going to pretend to..." And then it hit me. I didn't really know what the plan was, anyway. "Exactly what do we have planned anyway?"

"To trap Josh."

"Yeah, but lay it out for me step by step."

Ashleigh sighed and dropped down onto her bed. "Whatever." She said, exasperated. "Here's the plan, if you must know." She brought out a notebook from under her bed. "After we get done with the training, we get your sister to leave town, suddenly. We then have you take her place at school..."

"Wait a second!" I interrupted. "What do you mean, take her place?"

Ashleigh looked at me like I was a moron. "Well, that's what we agreed, right? That we'd just have you pretend to be Bailee."

I wasn't sure we'd ever "agreed" to this plan. But I had already gotten the sense that I wasn't really being consulted about this. The whole plan was Ashleigh's revenge, and I was just happy to be a pawn. Josh deserved all he was going to get.

"What we'll do is find a way to get Bailee out of town for a few days, without anyone knowing. Then, we tell the school and everyone else that it's Wyatt who's actually left town. So then, you go to school in her place. You spend a day or two hanging on Josh's arm, being popular and stuff, and then suggest to

him that after the prom, you have something special planned. We set it up so you lure him to a motel room, turn out the lights, and a bunch of guys we hire come in and strip down naked. Then we turn the lights on, snap some photos and stick them on the internet.”

“Shit.” I said, a little repulsed by the details. “Where do we get the guys?” Ashleigh just waved that off as if it were nothing. “It just takes some money. We’ll hire them from a male escort service or something. Leave that to me.”

“I don’t think I can actually take the *place* of Bailee, Ash. I mean, pretending to be a girl is hard enough, but being someone else is going to be really... I mean, I think it’s impossible to really try and convince someone close. My parents would know, her friends would know, Josh would know...”

“They’ll know only if you give it away. I totally agree with you. It’s going to be difficult. But I think you’d be surprised what we can get away with. Think about it, how closely have you ever looked at anyone you know?”

I closely looked at Ashleigh. I knew her atom by atom. “When you’re in love, you notice everything,” I said.

“Oh, I don’t think so. How many times have you heard someone say ‘I thought I knew them, but I was wrong’? People really don’t pay that close attention to other people. They think they do, but they don’t.”

“I pay attention.”

“Sure you do. But most people, if they cut their hair you never pick up on it until someone tells you. On the other hand, if you had your teeth bleached, your hair dyed, and been working out, you would look totally different. Nothing like you used to. But you tell someone who you are and they believe you without even batting an eyelash. They just take your word for it.”

She had a point there. But that wasn’t what I was thinking about. “I’m not talking so much physically, but as personality, and behavior. They’d believe me because I’d act like me, and talked like me, and laughed the same way and all that stuff.”

She turned to me and touched her finger to my nose. “And that’s what we’re going to fix.”



A couple of days after that, I must have been as bored as hell, because I switched on that little device Ashleigh had given me. It worked kind of like a police scanner, scanning the air for a signal. It went up and down the dial a couple of times before it picked up our neighbor’s phone.

“Looks like Summer’s finally going to hit,” and “Lawn’s going to need mowin’ this weekend” were some of the insights from that conversation. Then I heard the unmistakable trill of Bailee’s ring tone coming from her room. She had gotten a call.

Sure enough, the little device found it, and I was listening in.

“...annot *believe* she would wear that to school. It was *so* five years ago.” I could hear Brittany-Anne say. “Who’s picking out her clothes, her *mom*?”

Janessa was so eager to talk she practically shouted Brittany-Anne down. “I know! I know! I know! I know, it’s like, ring ring, it’s the year 2006 calling!” They all shared a good laugh over that.

Bailee finally spoke. "This town is so *stupid*. If I lived in the city, I'd never have to worry about this. Maybe I should just get up and leave. Living in LA would be so much better for me."

"Ohmigawd, it would be so *cool*," Brittany-Anne said, "with all the parties, going to premieres, sunbathing on the beach..."

Janessa was just as enamored. "I want to get a job, like being a lawyer or a veterinarian or something, and have a really cute boyfriend with an apartment forty floors up, looking over the city, and a white BMW, and I'd have a dog, I'd call him Corky..."

Bailee interrupted. "All I want is just for someone to realize all the *potential* I have in me." She said, dreamily. "And if I have to leave this dumb little town I'll do it. You guys understand, right?"

"Yeah, sure." Janessa said.

"With you all the way." Brittany-Anne added.

"So why didn't someone tell Hannah I was going to wear my plaid skirt today? I thought I told you guys to *tell* her!" Bailee said, whining.

"You never said that to me!" Janessa said, defending herself.

"I know I told you, Brittany-Anne!"

"I would have told Hannah you were wearing the skirt if you had told me, Bee!"

Bailee was angry. "I told you guys just last week that Wednesday was my plaid day, and *no one* wears plaid but me on Wednesday!" She then quieted down.

"Because she was wearing her plaid skirt, and I was wearing my plaid skirt, and Josh was all like 'I like hers better than yours...'" She actually started to sob a little. "This was my plaid day, and it's my *special* day..."

I clicked off the scanner thing, and stuffed my face in a pillow. I was trying to stifle my laugh. I don't know why I found it so funny, but it seemed hilarious to me at the time.

By the time I had composed myself, they were on to another topic.

"Do you like gum?" Bailee asked. "Because I really like gum. It's so... *chewy*."

Janessa was in total agreement. "*Really* chewy."

I listened for a little while longer, but I was just breaking up and couldn't keep from laughing. I had to go out and do something before I completely lost it.

I called up Derek to see if he wanted to meet up. "Hey." I said, when he picked up.

"Hey." He answered.

"What's up?"

"Nothin'."

"Yeah." There was a long pause.

"Was gonna go do stuff. You wanna?"

It sounded like Derek was thinking about it. "Homework."

"Oh."

"Went to that car show." He said.

"Any good?"

"Eh. S'okay."

"Cool."

"Yeah."

So I was tired of this. "Gotta run."

"Huh?" Derek said, a little startled. "But we were talkin'."

This was a conversation? I had to cut it off. "Yeah, sorry. Later."

"Fine." Derek said, and he hung up.

I don't know what his problem was. I know that was just kind of how we usually talked, but it was just so slow and pointless. I turned on the scanner device and got back into Bailee's call.

"I'm thinking of wearing my platforms tomorrow." Janessa said.

Bailee said, "Platforms are going out *so* fast."

"I know, that's why I want to wear them, before they go *totally* out of style."

Well, at least it was more interesting than Derek.



So, it was Sunday, and I got out of my place as fast as I could. Ashleigh had promised something special today, so I wanted to be on time. At her vanity, I had my face done in about fifteen minutes, and got my voice training out of the way quickly. All the while, I was waiting for Ashleigh to finish up her household chores. Even though her parents were gone all day, she said we'd be taking up the rest of the day and she had to get them done now.

I could still smell the breakfast they had eaten that morning, bacon and pancakes. Oh, my stomach craved food so badly. That diet was making me crazy for food.

By the time Ashleigh was ready, I was waiting for her, watching a little figure skating on TV. 'Michelle Singer's Ice Ballet' it was called. Yeah, I hated it, but I was dedicated to my task. Total commitment.

"Okay!" She announced she returned. "Today's a big day!"

"So I gathered." I replied, waiting for her to tell me why.

"Today we're going on a field trip!"

I didn't quite digest that when I heard it. "You mean... We... Will... Go *out*?" I scratched my head. "Outside?"

"That's what it means." Ashleigh said. "It's time to take you out into the world."

"Out there? You mean like, in the car?"

"No. I mean, walking around."

"Somewhere I can't be seen."

"No, somewhere where you *can* be seen."

"But..."

"Listen, we've been working at this for almost a week now. It's time to get you some experience outside these walls. You can walk like a girl, dress like a girl and talk like a girl. We need to put it all together and see what happens in the real world."

"I can tell you what's going to happen in the real world! I'll be spotted! I don't even look the part!"

"You've been practicing for almost a week. You can walk like a dancer in four-inch heels. You can talk like a vapid airhead blonde. What are you *not* prepared for?"

"I just don't think I can do it." I said. Two hours later, I was being pushed out of Ashleigh's car at the Oak Pines mall, on the other side of town. I guess I wasn't going to get out of this.



I had on some of Ashleigh's things: a short gypsy baby-doll top to hide all the fake curves on my chest and the real ones on my waist, a pair of looseish jeans, three-inch stiletto boots, and a pair of huge-eyed smoke-tinted sunglasses perched in my wig.



As we walked away from the car, my legs just turned to rubber. I couldn't stay on top of my heels. I had taken no more than half a dozen steps before I was falling over and using the parked cars to hold me up.

"Stop fooling around, Wyatt." Ashleigh said, angrily. "People are going to pay more attention to you the weirder you act."

"I can't do this. I can't go in there." I said. I started heading back to the car, even knowing I couldn't get inside without the keys.

Ashleigh grabbed me by the arm and got me back up onto my feet. Her grip was getting tighter. "Weeks of preparing and all it takes is ten seconds for you to screw it up." She tugged my arm, causing me to follow her. "If you act normal, no one will suspect anything. The only attention you'll get is because you look good."

"I'm going to make a mistake, I know it!" I said, "and then everyone is going to..."

"Of course you'll make mistakes!" Ashleigh said, exasperated. "That's the point! You make mistakes, we figure out what to fix, and then we'll be okay. That's why this is a *test* run!"

Before I knew it, I was about fifty feet from the doors of the mall, in full view of a dozen people. My legs turned to jelly. I wanted to run away so badly.

"Everyone's staring!" I yell-whispered to Ashleigh.

"The reason you get stared at is because you look good."

"I'm going to make a mistake. I know it." I said. I tried to turn and head back to the car, even knowing full well that I didn't have the keys to get inside.

Ashleigh quickly grabbed me by the arm and pulled me back to the mall.

"The more you act crazy the more people are going to get suspicious." She said.

That wasn't much of a comfort. "Oh God, oh God, oh God..." I said repeatedly.

"Shut the fuck up." Ashleigh said, shaking me off her arm. "Just smile and *pretend* like you're not falling apart like a five year old child without their mommy, okay?"

As I passed through the giant sliding doors into the corridors of the mall, I tried to look as confident and serene as I could. I probably looked anything but confident or serene, as I was barely able to walk, and my eyes were darting left and right looking at everyone. I was convinced they could all see the obvious.

"Kill me, please kill me, please please kill me. Kill me now, kill me now..."

Ashleigh elbowed me sharply in the ribs. "I told you to shut up."

When we got to the main corridor, Ashleigh turned left and I turned right. I really wasn't paying attention, and nearly twisted my ankle trying to turn around and follow her. I probably looked like Jim Carrey doing a bit, throwing my arms and legs around to turn back.



“Smooth.” Was all Ashleigh said.

I tried to match the pacing and calmness in her walk, but I was paying too much attention to it and collided with a few people. “Where are we going?” I asked.

“You need to get some new clothes.”

“I guess that was a ridiculous question.”

“Yes. And by the way, even though you think no one can hear us, you probably should be using your Bailee voice anyway.”

“What-ever,” I said, using the voice. “This is so boring!”

“What?”

“Nothing. That’s just what Bailee would say.” I said. “I was just trying to be funny.”

"Well, if Bailee was bored, what would she do?"

"Tell everyone how bored she was."

Ash sighed. "Yeah, that sounds like her. Definitely." She tugged my arm and pulled me into a store of some type. It could have been one of a hundred stores in the mall selling clothes to trendoid teenage girls. Who knows, who cares. All I knew was that it was a lot of pink, and everything cost three times as much as it should.

"What do I need? What do you want to get?"

"What a strange thing to ask," Ashleigh said. "This isn't about getting something you need, it's about getting something you want."

"What do I want?"

"Shut up, and look at the clothes."

"I can see them fine. They're all over the place."

Ash rolled her eyes at me. "No. I mean, pick them up, feel them, hold them up against yourself in a mirror. Grab a stack and try them on. You know, the usual stuff a girl would do."

"For how long?"

"Just do it."

"This is going to take forever, isn't it?"

"It's going to take longer the more you whine about it."

I sighed and tried to figure out what to do with myself. Bailee was so big on fashion, it seemed kinda silly to even try to figure out what she was going to be looking for. So I used some of my male instincts and just spotted the hottest girl in the store and went to go see what they were looking at.

The big thing back then was track suits. These kind of velveteen outfits that looked like pajamas with a hoodie. I went over to go paw my way through a rack of them, and nearly seized up when I saw the prices. Five hundred dollars. They couldn't be serious.

But, this was fashion, and anything goes. And truth be told, once I knew it was five hundred dollars, I was kind of curious to try it on. I had never worn anything that expensive before, and I was curious to see what it felt like.

I took a few sets that were in my size – and I was totally guessing what my size was – and went into the changing rooms. I was in the room when it suddenly occurred to me that a bunch of smokin girls were probably just inches away from me, with nothing but a curtain to keep me from seeing what I had spent most of my teenage years imagining. I had to sit down for a moment to catch my breath.

"How's everyone doing in here?" I heard a woman say. "Just a reminder that there's a limit of five garments in the booth at any time and a five minute limit in the booth." I jumped to my feet, scared stupid that I was going to get checked on. I wanted to pick up everything I had brought in, and put it back. Then I got paranoid that that was going to look suspicious. Then I started to think that trying the clothes on and taking this much time was going to look suspicious.

Ashleigh stuck her head through the curtain, which scared the crap outta me. She silently mouthed "get moving" to me.

I quickly changed into the track suit.

Slowly, oh was it slow, I emerged from the room and took some steps outside. I don't know why they put the mirrors out on the floor, but that where they

were. I had to walk all the way out there, take a look at myself and then return. I estimated the time I could accomplish this was about .042 seconds.

I got out to the mirrors and took a quick glance at myself. I thought I looked ridiculous. I took on half step back to the changing rooms and then someone said "hey Bailee" to my sister.

As I continued on, this person was persistent. "Fine, don't look at me Bailee." I turned the corner into the rooms and then realized exactly what was going on. She thought I was Bailee. The smart move would have been to keep moving, but I turned to look back at who was speaking. Dumb.

It was some girl from school. I had seen her around, and sometimes she hung out with my sister. I didn't remember her name.

"Uh... Hey." I said, trying to exit quickly. I continued into the changing rooms, thinking there was no way a girl was going to follow a boy into the rooms. They were off limits here. And if had been a boy at that time, this would have been a perfect plan. Instead, she just followed me.

"Pink's your color," the girl said to me.

"Pink?" I answered, a little offended. Then it came to me that I was in a women's pink track suit, pretending to be a girl. "Oh. Yeah." I added.

Ashleigh then hurriedly arrived, to my rescue. Or so I thought.

"Hey, Tanya!" Ashleigh said cheerily. "Here for the sale?"

"Uh, Bailee and I were having a private conversation, Ashleigh." Tanya said, rudely.

Ashleigh didn't budge or blink. "Yeah, Bailee and I are hangin' out today."

This Tanya girl looked at her incredulously. "You. And Bailee." She obviously didn't believe the story. "What *ever*." She just made a face and then continued on talking to me. "So I was down at the food court, and you'd never guess who I saw."

This was the point where I was supposed to guess.

"I... I don't know." I replied. How could she not tell I was a guy? She had to have been able to tell. I mean, I could barely talk. I knew she could tell. She could tell I was just faking it. Or maybe she just hadn't looked closely enough yet. I knew if I spoke again, I was going to blow it. If I shrugged or moved my eyes, she would be able to tell I was acting differently than Bailee. If it isn't obvious, I was scared out of my mind.

"*Curt Blundell*." Tanya said, as if it were the discovery of a lifetime.

"The quarterback who transferred out last year? He's *so* cute!" Ashleigh said, trying to force her way into the conversation.

Tanya just shot her a look and then continued to talk to me. "Oh my God, I think he's even more choice than he was last year!" She was swooning. "I'd totally do him." Tanya added.

"I would so totally do him." Ashleigh said. "Bailee?" She said to me, wanting my opinion.

The blood drained from my face. Were they seriously... Was I supposed to tell... Did they mean....? Yes. Yes they did. And they were waiting for my answer.

"I g... I g...g... guess." I replied.

Tanya interpreted that response to mean something more than it meant. "You haven't!" She said, her mouth agape. "Oh my God, you did! What's he like? Does he play rough?"