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The P A

By Max Swyft

1

“What’s this?”

“A little present. Open it.”

I look at it, glance around at the handful of others, mostly women, standing around, sipping champagne from long-stemmed flutes. A cozy little party.

The box is flat, wrapped in pink wrapping paper with red ribbon. I have a little difficulty with the ribbon. Liza Forrester takes the flat box and picks at the ribbon and tape with long, blood-red fingernails, hands it back to me.

Marge Martin comes up beside us to see what’s inside. I work — or used to work — for Marge, an older buxom woman who wears too much makeup and clothing a little snug for her figure. She thinks I have good taste, sometimes drags me along on shopping trips. Shopping trips

with Marge usually end up in lingerie where she'll try on different garments, strut just inside the corridor of the changing rooms so I can see her from the open archway. It's uncomfortable standing there. At times I suffer withering looks from other women who want their privacy. And who can blame them? Yet Marge insists I stay close by because she values my opinion, wanting to know if she looks good in whatever unmentionables she tries on. On these occasional shopping excursions, Marge is often in a devilish mood, likes to tease and torment.

It is often an exhilarating excursion. Marge Martin knows what she's doing, and it is such sweet torment.

When Marge sold her business she sent me along with references to Forrester Employment Associates, where I have since worked for the vivacious Liza Forrester.

I take off the lid. The contents are hidden under wrapping paper. I give Marge a look. She tells me to see what's inside. I fold back the delicate paper, look at the shiny ivory shirt with the fancy buttons, notice the rather wide collar and open neckline. "A shirt. Thank you, Ms. Forrester."

"It's Liza, Ron. Now that you're my new Personal Assistant we'll be on a first name basis." Then she adds, "Unless clients are present." She arches an eyebrow, says, "You understand?"

"Yes, Ms. — it will take some getting used to."

"Take it out."

I hand the box to Marge, take out the shirt, hold it at arm's length in front of me. I feel a blush at my cheeks, look at my boss, who now that I'm her new P.A., has granted me permission to address her by her first name.

Liza Forrester sips champagne, looks absolutely elegant in a short black slip dress and sling-back heels.

“Thank you so much.” I start to arrange the ivory shirt back into the box.

She nods.

I don’t know what to say, hesitantly venture, “It’s different.”

“Don’t you like it?” Liza says, that husky voice doing it to me again, giving me that light feeling in my tummy.

“Of course he likes it,” says Marge.

“Yes, I like it.”

“Want to try it on?”

“Here?”

She nods.

“You mean for me to wear this to work?”

“Yes. That is if you like it, Ron.” She skewers me with those dark hypnotic eyes.

“Uh, yes, of course I like it.”

“Rub it in your fingers, feel how slick it is.”

Her and Marge look at me expectantly.

“It’s like a caress. I know you’ll like wearing it.”

I have to look away from her penetrating stare, feel heat rise in my cheeks again.

“Remember, Marge and I are good friends. That’s how you got your job, Ron. Now don’t stand there and pretend innocence. Marge says you’re not so innocent. Shy yes, but innocent, no.”

Marge adds, “His mother taught him about clothing.”

I see the look that passes between Liza Forrester and Marge Martin, am glad the three of us are sort of standing apart from the other people in Ms. Forrester’s condo.

“She caught him playing with her intimates years ago. Boys do those sort of things and it’s flattering to certain women — women like us,” says Marge, speaking to my boss in a barely audible voice.

The fat old broad can be such a bitch at times, saying that to embarrass me in front of the tall elegant Liza Forrester.

I pretend not to hear, look away as if distracted by someone near the makeshift bar across the room.

The older robust woman, Marge Martin, gives me a meaningful look, makes me think of our shopping excursions, the provoking glimpses of her in fashionable and lacy undergarments. Once after one of these trips while riding back to the office in her large Buick, she coyly glanced at me and said, “Tonight at home will you think of me wearing that sexy black body briefer and stockings?” I had looked away, shrugged, was afraid to speak. “Will you see me when you do it, Ron?” I looked across the front seat, noticed the way her skirt was well above her knees under the steering wheel, how tautly the stockings fit her stout legs. “Whatever do you mean, Marge?” I’d said, looking out the window. I jumped when her hand patted my knee. “You know very well what I mean you naughty boy.”

While in this repast I miss Ms. Forrester’s comment, look at her as she catches my attention, and says, “It’s common with a lot of boys. Playing with their sisters or mother’s clothes. Their intimates.” She fixes me with dark eyes again and an involuntary shiver tickles my spine.

Both women look at me as I stand there holding the shirt. I can feel the eyes of some of the others from the office, almost feel trapped.

“It’s just a start, Ron. As my new P.A. we’re going to get along famously.”

I look at my boss, feel the full import of the words, plead with my eyes, don’t want to try on Liza’s gift now, tell them so. In the privacy of her bedroom, Liza suggests, her and Marge exchanging a look.

My old employer takes me by the elbow and steers me down the hall into Ms. Forrester bedchambers.

A huge, four poster pink canopy bed dominates the large room, is flanked on either side by small wooden nightstands and lamps. At the foot of the bed is a dark, intricately carved wooden trunk with a velvet burgundy embroidered bench top. The bed is neatly turned down on one side revealing a generous slice of what appears to be pink satin sheets. I’m aware of the springy carpet beneath my feet, wonder how such lush carpet would feel on bare feet.

A console table described in a half arc is snuggled along one wall, complimented by two ornate Chippendale chairs. Above the table is a large gilt-framed picture of a country stable depicting a handsome woman in riding britches and knee-length boots. She brandishes a riding crop, is about to mount her steed while scurrying around her are male livery boys.

The opposite wall highlights a crushed velvet burgundy claw-foot chase lounge of dark burnished wood with an intricately carved head rest. Above this impressive piece is a portrait of a woman with long flowing chestnut hair. She sits in an upholstered captain’s chair, hands draping the arms, wears a long flowing robe which is open to the waist. A diaphanous night dress accents a lush, nipple-studded bosom. The robe is parted at the hips, the diaphanous night dress outlining long crossed legs, feet in spiked, open-toe slippers. She is looking out

from the picture so that whoever gazes upon her majesty looks directly into an imperious face and confident eyes.

I am at once struck by this lavishly decorated boudoir and the sense of its empyrean splendor, feel my pulse quicken as I think of my employer reposing in such an intimate setting.

Marge takes my jacket, stands there while I strip off my shirt and undershirt, stand naked from the waist up. She smiles as her eyes travel over my exposed flesh. I can't help but notice my reflection in a cheval dressing mirror near the louvered doors of what looks to be a walk-in closet. My skin is pale and suggests a certain softness that somehow compliments unremarkable shoulders. There is a disturbing plumpness at my waist — something that Liza says she'll help me with — that I can't remember acquiring. I'm not inclined to a muscular physique, have always been on the slender side. So the roll at my tummy bothers me. But not as much as my chest. Like my tummy, it too has taken on a hint of plumpness.

Liza claims a diet and exercise regime will get me back in shape. That and the proper vitamins will speed up my metabolism and burn off fat. I've been taking some of the supplements Liza has recommended.

Marge hands me the silky shirt, and as I shrug into it I can't help but notice the darker color of my areola and nipples, how fatty tissue has settled there, too.

For months now Marge and I both have been taking the natural supplements Liza has so thoughtfully provided. While I see some improvement in Marge's robust figure, I am disappointed with my results. I will endeavor to do better, perhaps even to the point of jogging. Ms. Forrester has hinted that she might welcome my company during her exercise periods.

Liza, tall and older, is a walking advertisement for getting into shape and weight loss. Privately I suspect she is one of those fortunate people who never has to worry about weight gain.

It seems I am caught up in this, though I loathe exercise or working out. But it pleases my employer so I go along. Liza reasons, if it worked for her, it will work for someone younger like myself.

She jogs, does aerobics, eats berries and exotic fruits from subtropical forests. These healthy potions are all the rage today. She's almost a fanatic about it. However, Marge and I both are ingesting these exotic concoctions, if for no other reason than to humor the stubborn woman. What can it hurt, we are both on the frumpy side. It can only do us good. Though my results are lagging.

I've tried explaining that I've always had a rather delicate disposition.

The shirt is cool against my skin. Marge steps up, helps me with the buttons. Inadvertently the backs of her fingers graze my chest and that *new* sensation sends goose bumps along my forearms.

I start to tuck the shirt into my trousers but Marge stops me, wants to see how it looks wearing it out.

The tightness around my middle and the gaping material between the buttons at the waist make me frown.

Marge pats my butt, says with Liza's diet I'll grow into it.

I'm not so sure. I look at my reflection in the cheval mirror and shake my head. The taper at the waist of the shirt is too severe. Perhaps it's a size too small but Marge points out that it fits me at shoulder and chest.

It does not go unnoticed by me that Liza's present is a bit fru-fru. But I don't say anything.

Marge comes up beside me, smiles and nods, slides an arm around my troubled waist. "It looks good on you, Ron." She looks into my eyes and I feel her hand warm and comforting, sliding along my behind. "A little plump here aren't you, dear?" she says, patting my bottom, knowing I don't like it.

"Yes," is all I can manage. I avert my eyes, shiver as she caresses my backside with a firm hand. "I'm going to exercise with Ms. Forrester, get more into the fat burning supplements."

"Of course you are, dear. I'm going to miss you, Ron."

"And I you."

"I'll especially miss taking you along shopping."

It strikes me that I, too, will miss these enticing excursions. Though Marge is a bit portly, there's always been something provocative about our relationship. Something sensual. Especially near the changing rooms when Marge would seek my approval about what she tried on.

I knew she did it on purpose, teasing me, making me stand near the entrance, other ladies flitting about, looking at me reproachfully.

My cheeks redden as I recall a few of these escapades in ladies lingerie, my embarrassment and that tenacious edge of excitement that seemed always to accompany my acute awkwardness.

I catch her eye in the mirror, am aware of her hand on my butt. "I will miss shopping with you too, Marge."

She's about to respond when Liza breezes in with two fresh long-stemmed glasses of bubbly, appraises me and nods her head. She doesn't say anything about the tightness and gaping buttons at my waist.

She looks positively stunning in the simple black slip dress, like she has just stepped off a fashion runway. Her

feet, in spiked sandals, show off a gold toe ring on her right middle toe and the aforementioned long fingernails match brightly polished red toenails.

Looking at her, I'm taken back to our initial interview when she came around her desk and took the chair beside me. She wore a dark grey skirt suit that did little to hide her exquisite figure. Slowly she crossed long lean legs in the short skirt and gave me the first hint of her polished toes in open-toe slingbacks. That cool blustery day she wore sheer hosiery that fit so well I had to look twice to make sure she was wearing hose.

Legs of a runway model and an elegant figure to go with them.

About the time Liza Forrester came into my life, Marge my old employer, came by the house one Saturday to pick up my mother. The two of them went shopping. That has been over a year ago and I learned that afternoon Marge had sold her accounting business to another firm.

I was serving them tea and it came as a shock. Marge had always had the annoying habit of patting me on the backside, and she did it that afternoon, told me not to worry, she had recommended me to one of her friends who was in business for herself. She'd taken the liberty of scheduling an appointment the next week.

In her office the next week, Liza Forrester commanded all my attention, but not nearly so much as when she stood from behind her desk and sat beside me in one of the twin chairs that faced the desk.

Liza has that indefinable demeanor that few women possess. It is not only her tall beauty that commands attention but an aura of promise. A hazy hint of sexuality that makes one take notice.

She has a presence that is almost palpable.

When she sat beside me and crossed her legs, it was like the atmosphere in her office had suddenly become electric. It was an intoxicating moment. I was aware of her large dark eyes, high cheek bones, shoulder-length dark brown hair and lush lips.

Oh, those lips, so full and crimson accented, framing a large voluptuous mouth.

What my mother calls a singer's mouth.

I detected a scent of perfume which was not flowery. Refreshing and citrusy was what came to mind.

"What we are, Ron, is flesh peddlers."

Her close proximity nearly made me speechless. Finally I uttered a weak, "Oh?"

She smiled, leaned forward and put the manila folder which was covering her lap on the edge of her desk, the movement raising her skirt and revealing those glorious legs to mid-thigh.

She crossed her legs the other way and my breath caught in my throat. Perhaps it was the moment but I have never gazed upon a finer set of legs in all my life.

"Here at the agency we cater mostly to women in the professional workplace. We do place men in some positions but our specialty is the career-minded woman of the twenty-first century. Statics tell us that by the year twenty-ten, sixty percent of the wealth of this country will be controlled by women (true). Many of these women are rising in the workplace. It is our goal to place them in the best possible careers."

"Oh?"

She nodded and smiled — perhaps from my darting eyes — I'm not sure.

One foot started swinging back and forth in the smart slingback open-toed pumps. I didn't realize it then, on that initial interview, but Liza almost always wore smart fashionable shoes, and, on occasion, the odd pair of low heels or flats.

When the lissome Ms. Forrester would look away I'd drink of her legs, how her foot would swing to and fro. With some trepidation and anticipation I wondered of the hosiery she wore under her skirt, whether pantyhose or nylons with garters. Just thinking about it sent a little quiver through me. Nearly all of the women on mother's side of the family had robust figures. I was used to them parading around in their underwear, was secretly thrilled to see them clad in girdled garters and hose, longline bras and corsets or pantyhose. Too, these women wore smart stylish shoes.

But none of them could compare to the tall and elegant Liza Forrester.

It took great effort to concentrate on that all-important interview.

"Marge thinks you'll fit in well here, Ron. What do you think so far?"

"Yes, yes, I'm a quick learner, can be trained to new duties, Ms. Forrester."

"Oh, yes. Of that I am sure."

The interview ended too quickly.

She signaled it by standing, turning and leaning her rump against the dark mahogany desk. She gazed into my eyes, then crossed her legs at the ankles.

"Would you like to come work for me, Ron?" The way she said it sounded like a sexual invitation and an involuntary throb made me squirm in the chair.

"Yes. Very much."

"I have a few other applications to go over and will let you know in a few days. Will that be okay with you?"

"Yes. I'll do my best to please you, Ms. Forrester."

"I'm sure you will." She fixed me with those large dark eyes. "Thank you for coming in."

I stood awkwardly, took one last look at the tall woman and thanked her profusely.

Walking toward the door I was stopped by her voice.

I turned. "Yes?"

"Ron, do you like my shoes?"

"Er, hmm. Yes."

"You don't think the open-toe is too casual, out of place for this time of year?"

Afraid to speak, I shook my head, looked as she uncrossed her legs at the ankles and sauntered over to me, walking like a runway model. Putting one hand on my shoulder, she turned one ankle out then in, said to me, "I'm glad you like them, Ron."

2

I stand in Liza's inner office, wait for my boss, who went into her executive bathroom while I changed. Liza claims men have little sense for fashion and she has used that reasoning to assist my wardrobe. I'm a bit uneasy about her selections but I don't want to seem ungrateful. Besides, I've received favorable compliments from mostly women coworkers about the fashionable styles Liza has so thoughtfully selected for me.

I'm lagging behind in the weight reduction program Liza has so thoughtfully provided. The natural vitamins

designed to increase my metabolism, the fruity and frothy drinks which are thick as milk shakes, don't seem to be working very well. I've also been less than enthusiastic with the exercise regime demonstrated on the video.

I have lied to her about the aerobics video program and feel bad about being deceitful.

I've been her P.A. now for three months, and I absolutely adore this attractive woman. In fact, I am hopelessly smitten with her. I am only too happy to wait on her. Not only am I her Personal Assistant, I've largely taken over the duties of her secretary who was recently promoted to Administrative Assistant of Placements.

Just last week I moved from my office down the hall into the secretary's office which adjoins Ms. Forrester's. Liza tells me I should get two salaries, one as her Personal Assistant and the other as her secretary. It is very flattering.

I'm going to recommend she purchase these delightful shirts and slacks one size bigger. This one, that I just tried on is a light grey, and, as the lady likes, I wear it out over my slacks. Wearing these shirts out is all the rage now, Liza tells me.

Maybe but it makes me look a little hippy.

I hear the faint gurgle of a toilet, then running water, look to the mirrored door of the executive bathroom.

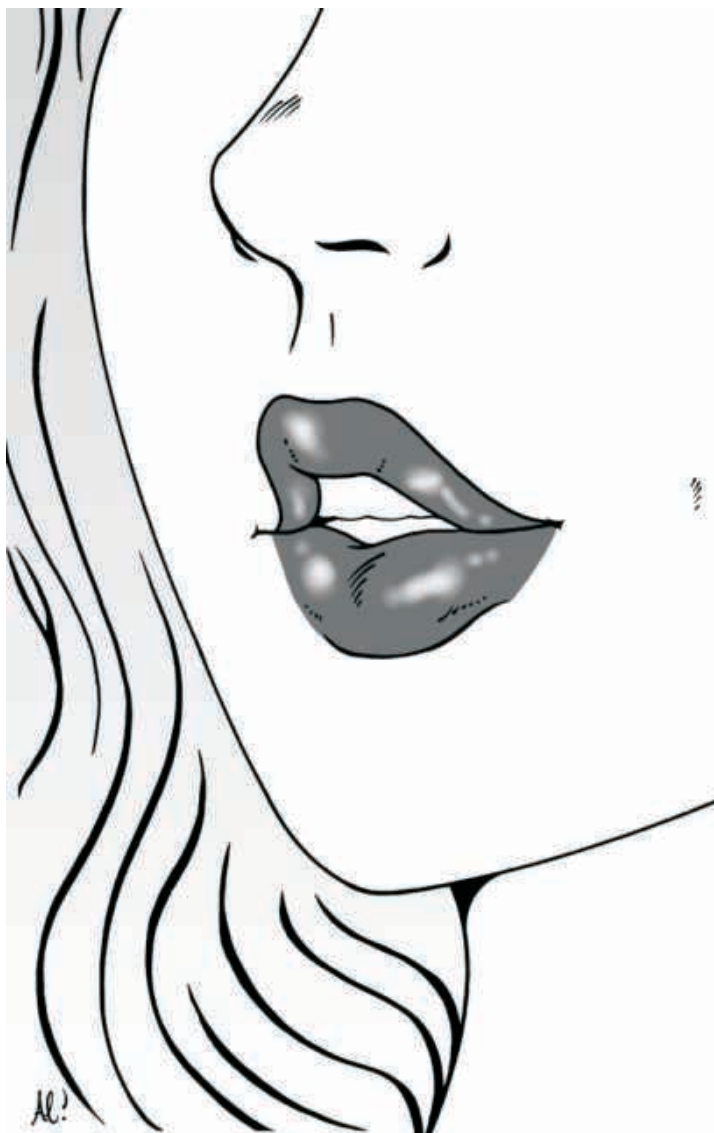
Liza opens the door, gives me a bright smile, comes over and gives me the once over with her large dark eyes.

"Hmm," she says.

"It's a little tight," I carp.

"We can fix that, hon," she says, putting her hands lightly at my waist.

We're standing close and I inhale the ambrosia of her perfume, look into her eyes, notice the tiny crow's feet at the corners, slight wrinkles at the corners of her lush mouth, how sensual those full pouty lips look, wonder what it would be like to kiss them, taste the glistening redness of her lipstick, feel her tongue slide against mine.



"Dear, are you coming down with something?"

"Er, no, I don't think so."

"Hmm, you look a little feverish."

Today she wears earth-tone slacks. I'm a little disappointed, am hopeful of seeing her in a skirt tomorrow, perhaps fashionable heels. Nearly every morning when I bring Liza her coffee, she'll ask me if I like her outfit, does it flatter her gangly figure. I've told her more than once she'd look good in a burlap bag.

"Bring the shirt with you tomorrow and we'll get a better fit." She sees my doubtful look and wags her finger. "There's a lot of tricks women know to make their clothes fit properly. Bring along the shirt tomorrow and we'll fix your look."

"Ah, Liza, I don't want you to think I'm not appreciative of your efforts to make me look fashionable but . . ." I don't know how to finish.

"Yes?" she prompts, hands on hips.

"Well, the shirts and slacks you've so thoughtfully bought me. I'm grateful. Really, I am. But they're all a bit snug for my body, especially around the waist. That's why I wear them out, as you suggested. Don't you think a bigger size might be the answer?"

"Hmm, well, Ron, once you get down to your proper body weight the clothes will flatter very nicely. You'll see." She regards me thoughtfully for a moment. "I'm sorry I'm such a fashion hound," she adds, "but it will work out fine. Wait and see."

I go over to the couch and chairs, the low triangular table that dominates one corner of her spacious office, retrieve my shirt. Picking it up I look at her, don't know why I feel a bit uncomfortable changing back in front of her.

Perhaps reading my mind, she suggests I change shirts in her executive bathroom. I thank her and go into the bathroom, get out of the new shirt and into the other which is a bit snug through the middle but fits better, has a conventional collar and single button long sleeves. The new shirt has a wide collar, is longer in length, actually has darts which make it taper, is constructed of a slick microfiber material and has three-button cuffs.

I look around the expansive tiled bathroom. It is all chrome and mirrors, has built-in wall cabinets and a shower at one end, the shower doors mirrored. Beside the commode is a small wicker hamper.

I need to pee but dare not use her private facilities, am compelled to raise the lid and gaze into the hamper. I don't know what's gotten into me. Quietly I raise the lid, peer inside, see a small collection of undergarments; a slip, bra, pairs of panties, what looks like a torn pair of pantyhose.

All of these intimates will hold her musky scent and I actually go hard thinking about how this tall woman might smell, especially the inset of her worn panties. Gazing upon this underwear I feel faint, wish I hadn't looked into the wicker hamper.

This is a violation of her privacy and I feel bad about doing such a sneaky and . . . perverted thing.

I gather up the new shirt and exit the bathroom, find Ms. Forrester behind her desk perusing a file. She looks up, smiles, reminds me to bring the new shirt along in the morning, hands me the file and instructs me to give it to her old secretary who she recently promoted to Administrative Assistant.

To show initiative I'm one of the first ones at work. Liza usually breezes in around eight-thirty or nine, and anticipating her arrival I make coffee. This morning she

comes into the office, carrying a couple small shopping packages. She wears a checked brown, knee-length hound's-tooth flared skirt-suit with wide pleats, the long single-breasted jacket draped past her hips and trimmed in dark brown velvet. Light brown hosiery compliments the outfit along with sensible two inch heels in brushed brown velvet. The equestrian style of her suit flatters her tall lithe figure, and I am reminded of the portrait of the woman in riding breeches at a stable that hangs in her bedroom. Atop a horse and commanding her empire, the woman would look right at home.

As always she looks exquisite, as if she stepped right out of a clothing catalog.

I rush to open the door to her office.

She turns her head going through, shakes long chestnut locks from her face and says, "Coffee."

My coffee ritual is well timed. At the credenza I pour my boss a mug and hurry after her. She has deposited the shopping bags on the low table in the corner which is surrounded on two sides by comfy furniture. I set the mug on her desk and await any instructions she might have.

She pushes a button under the lip of the desk. I hear faint mechanized whirring as the draperies part, slide back on runners. The floor to ceiling smoky-tinted wall windows overlook a small park below, the early morning April sun chasing shadows from the park and street below.

She beckons me forward and the two of us gaze down upon the scene through the smoked glass. Ms. Forrester casually drapes an arm over my shoulder. "It's going to warm up today, Ron, be spring-like. Maybe we can squeeze in a walk through the park this afternoon."

"That would be wonderful."

It is almost an intimate moment, standing beside this tall woman, aware of the slight scent of her perfume, the contour of her lean body so near. She hugs my shoulder and I feel the imprint of her breast on my arm.

I look at her face. Pale pink lipstick adorns bee-stung lips, and I entertain a brief fantasy; holding her in my arms, kissing those adorable lips, sending my tongue inside her mouth, hearing her moan from the passion of this phantom kiss.

Liza sighs, sits in her upholstered captain's chair, instructs me to bring one of two chairs that face her desk around to the side.

"Busy day, Mr. Lambert. Set up a meet and greet with Lance Consolidated for — "She swivels around in the captain's chair gazes at the panoramic view afforded by the wall to wall windows, crosses her legs, doesn't bother to tug the hounds-tooth skirt to her knees. " — Friday afternoon, I think. Make sure Todd's and his minions are free for drinks afterward."

"Want me to make reservations?" I say, glancing at how the pleated skirt rides high on comely brown tinted legs, the hosiery so sheer as to appear as second skin. "It being Friday most clubs in the Canyons are liable to be a bit crowded."

"Good idea." She looks at me, leans over and pats my knee.

Her hand lingers. Or is it just wishful thinking?

"Look up Smith & Rayburn and print me a summary of our placements with them for the last six months." She looks almost apologetic as her eyes fall on mine. I look up from ogling her long stems. "I know it's simpler to send me the info on our computer network, Ron, but I like to have a hardcopy at hand."

"That's not a problem."

"That's about it for now."

She must have caught me looking: "Is there something wrong with this outfit, Ron?"

"Er, no. It's very nice, kind of equestrian, I think."

"Do you see something I don't," she says softly. "Do I have a runner, something else?" She arches an eyebrow, that gesture common to all women.

I wonder if she's teasing me.

"Uhm, no." I look out the wall windows, sit forward in the chair.

Hands in her lap, Liza extends one leg, turns it in and out, points her foot. "I don't mind, really."

"Don't mind . . . what?"

"You looking, hon. I just love the adoration in your eyes. That's one of the reasons I hired you."

My adoring eyes. I didn't realize I was so obvious. Her remark makes me blush and I quickly take leave of her office.

Liza usually leaves the door open to her inner sanctum. She seldom uses the com-line. I like it that way, too, usually leave the door facing the hall and employee pool open.

I look up from my monitor, notice the exodus toward the elevators, realize it's lunchtime, get up and peek inside her office.

"It's lunch. Will you be eating out or do you want something delivered?"

I follow her glance to the packages on the low table in the corner. "Hmm, want to share one of those large Greek salads from that new place around the corner?"

"That'd be great." I call in the order for delivery."

Our one floor office pretty much clears out at lunch, a few workers lingering over unfinished work. I make a second pot of coffee at the credenza, knowing my boss likes to fortify her afternoon work schedule with caffeine.

I take her a freshly brewed cup of java, notice her discarded shoes beside the desk, unobtrusively peer at her feet to see if finger and toenail polish match. The room is dim, sunlight blocked by a sea of slow moving cottony clouds. In the shadows of her desk I can't discern if the polish matches. Back at my desk I finish a couple open files.

The clock slowly passes several minutes.

I'm aware of a flowery scent behind me, feel the slight pressure of a slim breast on my shoulder. Inadvertently I jump and she stills me with either hand at my shoulders. Her long hair tickles my cheek as she peers at my monitor.

"I didn't mean to scare you."

I can't think of a thing to say, feel unseen excitement boil within my desk well.

"Working on the Dimensions file, I see. Check with Mary this afternoon, see if she needs any warm bodies. It's been a while since we've placed anyone with her firm."

"Yes ma'am."

She stands and I notice the empty mug in one hand, watch as she goes to the credenza in stocking feet and pours from the Bunn coffee machine. She comes back, looks at her watch. "Where is that salad?"

"I'll check."

A few minutes later, a cup of coffee in hand, I go into her office, find her on the couch in the corner rummaging through the packages.

“Lunch?”

“On its way. The office pool is deserted. Everybody taking advantage of this fine weather, I guess.”

Liza looks up, smiles. “Did you bring that shirt in today?”

“Yes.”

She nods, seems pleased, tells me to fetch it. I come back with the shirt. “Shut the door and I’ll show you what I’ve come up with.”

I sit across from her in a stuffed armchair, sneak a peek up her flared skirt.

She extracts something shiny and pale from one of the bags. “Take off your shirt, hon. Try this on.” She gets up, stands by my chair while I slowly take off my shirt. It is an awkward moment baring myself from the waist up, yet she makes it seem commonplace. I wear no undershirt, blush as her eyes travel over my semi-nakedness.

“What is it?” I say, sipping coffee, stalling, secretly dreading whatever’s coming.

She runs her hand inside the tubular garment of stretchy mesh which looks suspiciously like a woman’s support undergarment.

“You put this on usually by stepping into it.” She glances at my trousers, gives me a look.

“What is it?”

“It’s a slimmer, one of those new figure flattering garments.”

“A, uhm, slimmer?” Incredulous.