

SORORITY LIFE

By Sofronia Anne Strong



ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN DUKEHART

A 'HER TV' NOVEL

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“SORORITY LIFE”

by Sofronia Anne Strong

Chapter 1

Dear Mother:

I haven't worn pants in months.

Mother Felicity feels that pants, while worn universally by both sexes for centuries, are altogether too gender specific for her purposes. Pants have become *de rigueur* for women long since, of course, but she feels they are really quite unfeminine as a rule and allow way too much freedom of movement and don't lend themselves to proper “female” decorum.

“Skirts,” she says, “are a must for those of us who would learn to be more feminine and ladylike.”

I was quite fascinated, therefore, when she selected a pair for me to wear as part of a Donna Karan ensemble which I wore to a soiree' at the Omega Alpha Iota chapter house last night.

True, the legs were very wide, rather like long culottes more than trousers. They hung like a voluminous skirt, which is what must have impressed her. Being of shiny, semi-sheer black silk satin, they could hardly appear to be masculine.

The ensemble had an over-tunic of black silk moire and its skirt came to just above my knees. With this my shoes made a stark contrast of silver slipper satin with their four inch high heels, open backs and tiny bows on the toes.

I also wore that single strand of pearls that you gave me with the matching tear-drop earrings and Mother Felicity found me some long black satin gloves.

I looked so deliciously feminine and elegant, with my make-up just so and my hair pulled back in a French roll. With my male parts safely tucked away beneath my tight gaffe and my short black slip beneath the pants I felt quite secure in my femininity.

Mother Felicity is such a great help. She is never wrong about what makes a boy look truly like a girl.

Really, Mother, now that I've finished my pre-pledge period and been accepted as one of the girls, I'm so proud and happy in my female role that I never want to be taken as a boy ever again.

I really have become so very female. It has been a hard and rigorous training I have undergone, and it nearly went awry more than once. But, I have passed muster at last and have become a very thorough young lady.

The dinner was quite grand.

We brought three pledges out and invested them as sisters, all dressed in their ball gowns of sculptured silks and fine lace as they paraded before the Chapter. They seemed so proud and delighted to have found and brought out their second selves, so self-confident in their newly discovered femme personae.

Mother Felicity congratulated them on the end of their pre-pledge period and pronounced them successfully transgendered, as it had been for me just a few weeks ago.

Our Chapter now has seventeen actives, five of us transgendered pledges and three new pre-pledges, who are discovering the rigors of that condition. They are discovering that there are no half measures here in the process of discovering how to be girls.

They look really wretched in their outlandish black and white uniforms, and I can attest to how wretched they really feel. In a few months they will be parading with the rest of us, perfect models of femininity and fashion. But now, as they begin, they are suffering mightily in their petticoats and rustling uniforms. They blush with embarrassment through their curtsies.

Some of them may not make it. Unable to bear up under the rigors of forced feminization. But, the others will find the girl within and learn to delight in her. If they really want to be transgendered we will soon be investing them in lovely new gowns as we did the three new pledges last night. There is nothing for it but to live the sorority life for a while. Only by getting into totally feminine gear can we find out if we really want to be transgendered.

One of them, Leslie Sue, has been assigned to me as a Little Sister so that she will have a shoulder to cry on. I am supposed to shore her up and help her retain her resolve to become a proper lady and bring out her real feminine identity.

Leslie Sue seems quite sweet and well intentioned, but she is so embarrassed wearing her new uniform frocks. I think she will make a fine lady once she gets used to a life in dresses and heels.

She is quite anxious and ashamed of it yet, but I think she will find her second self soon enough. She complains of nightmares and anxiety attacks, but Dr. Werther has put her on Prozac and she seems to be settling in with it.

Between the demands of her Pledge Mother to stand straight and walk daintily, chin up, chest out, and my reassurances that she is doing well, I am sure she will stay with the program. She is embarrassed by her "D" cups, but she is a big girl and can learn to be proud of her new bosom.

Mother Felicity has these new girls sewing simple patterns already and I am sure that Leslie Sue will be wonderful in her ball gown by the time she finishes her pre-pledge period.

I still wonder at my good fortune in being accepted into an exclusive Sorority that accepts boys who want to live as women and is willing to show us how, even if they make it difficult for us. I am succeeding here, at last, and it is a wonderful challenge and a pure joy, especially after the terrific ordeal I went through under Mommy Gloria.

I do think it was wonderful of you to see that I was harboring a girl within myself, Mom, and to find the Omega Alpha Iota program for me.

When you and Sis first caught me wearing her prom dress, I was so mortified and embarrassed, but you were astute enough to see that it had real importance to me and that I wasn't just weird or perverted. You realized I must have been dressing up in secret for some time, and I thought you didn't know that. Even though I was aware that transgendered men are accepted in society nowadays, I was still afraid of my desire to play the girl.

I have taken a part time job at a fashion boutique downtown and it does wonders for my self-assurance and it helps pay for new wardrobe, and that is essential. I hope that you, Daddy and Sis can come down for the Spring Fling, for which I have made a fantastic new gown. I want you all to see me in it and see for yourselves how much of a lady your son has become. I hope you are all proud of me.

All my love,

(Miss) Gladys Christine Groves

My dear Mr. Groves:

It is my happy duty to inform you that you have been selected by the Scholarship Committee of the National Office of the Omega Alpha Iota Sorority as the recipient of the Selma Foster Barnes Scholarship to Williston College.

Congratulations!

The scholarship should be sufficient to fund your expenses for tuition, and room and board at the Tau Delta Chapter House for the next four years.

You must, of course, complete the pledge program there and remain a Sister in good standing. There should also be sufficient funds to assist you in maintaining the wardrobe selected for you by the House Mother.

This scholarship is sustained by an income from the Selma Foster Barnes Foundation and is awarded to that applicant to Williston College who shows the greatest prospects for developing a feminine gender identity and desire to become transgendered.

Your own interview, your psychological tests and hormone test results indicate that you have a great desire and capacity for developing a genuine *femme persona*. Your history of crossdressing also indicates this likelihood.

We feel that under the guidance of Mother Felicity and the Sisters of the Beta Tau chapter, you will develop into a charming and wholly successful young lady.

The committee has agreed that the *femme* name you have selected is suitable and you should hereafter identify yourself as Miss Gladys Christine Groves in your dealings with the Sorority.

Yours in Sisterhood,

Wilma Wilberforce

Chair,

Selma Foster Barnes Foundation

Needless to say, I was overjoyed. Mom and Dad were capable of funding only part of a college education for me. Being admitted to Williston had been the first good fortune.

This school had pioneered the frontier of accepting transgendered students back when it first became an issue. Then, when Omega Alpha Iota set up its program for helping guys like me, Beta Tau had become the model chapter for the whole Sorority.

To become a lady at the Beta Tau chapter at Williston would become a wonderful entry in my resume' after graduation. There were over two thousand applicants to Williston each year but they admitted only twenty boys who planned to attend as coeds and of those, only eight or ten would be able to pledge Omega Alpha Iota.

And there was only one Barnes Scholar each year. I considered myself truly fortunate.

Omega Alpha Iota was unique. Transgendering was no longer bizarre or even unusual now, but the new ladies which Omega Alpha Iota transformed in their chapter house were considered remarkably feminine and desirable.

To have come that route was a wonderful entry into the "Old Girl" network that had established itself in the country. Those coming from the Delta Tau Chapter House entered the Work World with a special cachet.

Mom and Dad were as thrilled as I was. My sister merely sighed a long sigh of relief and said, "Maybe you'll stay out of my closet now?"

I blushed helplessly.

I received the letter just weeks before school opened and Mom and I were busy putting together a suitable wardrobe for me. I must confess to a little embarrassment as we shopped, getting fitted with bras, foundations and new dresses.

That feeling was just nervousness, I am sure, on my part. I loved wearing women's attire, but all of my previous experience had been strictly alone and in hiding.

It was one thing for Society to accept the transgendered, but I still wasn't used to the feel and look of myself in frocks and gowns, dresses, lingerie, wigs and cosmetics piling up in my room.

Mom urged me to go ahead and dress, but I told her I would put it off until I got into school.

She and Sis just laughed at my reticence. On Saturday night they ganged up on me and made me dress up for dinner. It felt wonderful, and they were delighted with my appearance.

Still, I felt some sense of embarrassment. *'It would be easier at school,'* I thought, *'than in front of my family.'*

I was going away to college for an education, but more particularly to learn to be Miss Gladys Christine Groves, a coed. It leaves one really hung up to want something so completely and yet be afraid of it. I reckoned things would be easier once I was away from home.

Boy, did I have that wrong!

Sis had taken to calling me "Gladdy," and sneering when she said it. She told me that I would find that being a girl trying to be attractive and stylish all the time was a big pain, but I notice that she spent hours on herself, anyway.

My sister, Lois, can be such a pill. She doesn't seem to like the idea of having a little sister any better than she has liked having a younger brother.

Mom shut her up the other night by telling her that if I turn out to be prettier than she it will put her in her place.

Boy, would I like that, but then, on the other hand, it might be dangerous.

Dear Mommy,

I was met at the train by a reception committee of Sisters from the Chapter House. They took me back to the House, stuffed me with rolls, coffee and girl talk and dropped me off at the Dean of Women's Office for registration and a dormitory assignment. I will have to live in Holderman Hall until I am pledged.

It seems silly to go through the rigmarole of pledging when I am already committed to Omega Alpha Iota, but the rules require it.

Everyone knows I am destined to be an Omega Alpha Iota, but I have to go to all the rush parties in all of the fraternity houses because until I sign a pledge at Omega Alpha Iota, I am technically just one of the boys. While the rush is going on there is such a polite gentility about it all, as though the campus were just one big happy family and we are merely the new arrivals. Everyone knows where I am headed so they are all just polite and civil with me.

When school opens next week I will pledge Omega Alpha Iota and be drawn into their program for transforming us snips and snails and puppy dog tails into sugar and spice and everything nice.

I will wear the yellow chiffon formal you picked out for me for the ceremonies. I think it came out quite well, even if I do think it's too little girlish, I know you liked it. I tried it on again and the neck line seems just right.

When we come for pledging ceremonies, we are supposed to try to look our best and most feminine. If I can get my make-up just right, I think I will do well enough. They are such perfectionists at the house, I am sure they will think I look just awful.

I am still embarrassed to look at myself in the mirror and I think I would just die if anyone saw me in the gown, but the whole Chapter will see me Monday. But, that is what I am here to do, isn't it?

I am sure I will make it. Pray for me.

I have had tea with Mother Felicity and she is quite reassuring, insisting that I am going to make a wonderful little lady, but the rumors about how they go about making that happen are pretty scary.

Again, pray for me!

Love,
Gladys.

Chapter 2: A Tiny Taffeta Twit

I got through it! They made me promenade for them, all of us, trailing yards of satins and lace, taffeta and chiffon, moire' and crepe de chine and enough ribbons and bows to outfit a cotillion!

We must have looked like an inept parade of tomboys in their first formals. When I decided that I wanted to take up a new life as a girl, I hadn't yet envisioned myself in such terribly effeminate costume. After our introductory promenade, which had brought on some embarrassing commentary on our ineptitude and lack of femininity, the pre-pledge initiation made it clear that there would be no compromises and no half way measures taken in the process of teaching us to become little ladies. No one had warned me about foundation garments that would encase me from the top of my bust to the middle of my thighs, or of the way my private parts would be bound between my legs in a lace encrusted parenthesis. Clothing so restrictive and cumbersome, so hyper-effeminate, that I could hardly move and heels so high I could only mince about in them, all became my constant torment. Being constantly perfumed was also a new experience. Its pervasive scent became a constant reminder of my new gender.

I'm not allowed to talk about the actual pledging ceremonies, but I can say that I now have an active member who is my Pledge Mother, but she is more like a Mistress than anything maternal. Her name is Gloria Fitkin, although I must address her as "Mummy Gloria." She is a junior and I am not the first pre-pledge she has tormented. I am supposed to watch and emulate her and model myself on her, thus learning how to be a lady. If I am obedient and cooperative and diligent, she says, I will soon be successfully effeminate.

Life as a male Omega Alpha Iota pre-pledge is not easy. The house rules fill a whole book and we are supposed to know them all and abide by them perfectly from the first night we were pledged. The stick comes down, quite literally, for every infraction. The carrot is that when we get it right, we are praised for being feminine.

After the embarrassing promenade, we were all herded into a small, dimly lit room in the basement and stripped of our promenade gowns and left in nothing but our wigs, heels and little lace edged groin covers. Our wrists were tied together in front of us with satin ribbons. One end of these ribbons was wrapped around our necks so that our hands were before our faces and the longer end of the ribbon was left dangling to the floor.

We were then made to face the wall and stand in silence. Each of us was taken into the chapter room, one by one, and the rest of us could hear the crying and moaning of the ones who had gone in before. It was really terrifying to be left wondering what was happening in there and awaiting the same fate. What really did happen, I am not allowed to reveal, but I'll just say that I came out of there pretty sore and feeling very small and helpless and non-virginal in body and mind, and convinced that I must learn to be a good little girl at any cost!

Anyway, I had now been pre-pledged, which meant that I was to have the opportunity to convince the members that I really wanted to be transgendered and was now sworn to achieve that goal. I was led back out, still tied and led by the long ribbon, but now I was clutching a pledge manual. Even though I hadn't even looked at it yet, I had been told that I was responsible for the proper execution of its contents at all times.

One by one, we were led into another room where three active members fitted us out in our pledge uniforms. We had had no inkling of this ahead of time. Two other pledges were already dressed and standing against the wall of the dressing room when they led me in. When I saw them, I nearly fainted. We already knew that we would begin our pledge duties doing the menial house chores. That was true in all Greek houses, but no one had revealed the kind of uniform we would have to wear.

The sight of my fellow pledges in their new costumes was appalling. They were really awful. Mummy Gloria says the uniforms are so awful because it will motivate us to succeed as pledges just to get out of them. She has a point there. The uniforms are simply not wearable. No housemaid ever wore such an outlandish get-up. The first shock came when I saw the part of the uniform no one would see.

The three actives unbound me and approached me with some garment I couldn't quite figure out, until they had me imprisoned in it!

I found myself in a cage they called a "Figure Former". And it did just that too. When it was fully laced and hooked and zipped, my rear end stuck out, my hips and fanny bulged alarmingly, and I had a huge new chest with two breasts that looked like projectiles!

My shoulder blades seemed to be nearly touching one another and my knees seemed to be locked into contact with one another, pinned together by a thigh hugging encasement of satin and lace that came nearly to my knees. Rigid strips of vertical boning formed my figure from my hips to my bust.

A ruching of tulle stood out along its shoulder straps and lace edging followed the lines of the boning and covered the cups of the brassiere. As though the stays weren't sufficient to jerk and hold my figure into an exaggerated feminine posture, I found that it had a steel stay that ran from below my rear end to a flat, padded plate between my shoulder blades. This forced me into an exaggerated S-curve profile. My shoulders were locked back, my rear end thrust out behind me and my bosom thrust upward and outward to an exaggerated degree. I nearly fainted as it was finally secured in place. I realized that I could neither bend nor sit with it on.

I consoled myself with the thought that it must be part of the pledging ritual and that I certainly couldn't be expected to wear it very long. I gasped and teetered in the wretched thing. I cried out involuntarily and placed one hand against the wall to steady myself. One of my dressers grabbed my hand and spun me around, twisting my arm behind my back in a break hold while a second one hit me behind the knees, dropping me onto them. As I knelt, the third dresser pinched my nose until my mouth opened, gasping for breath.

“It says on page four that a Tiny Taffeta Twit is not allowed to speak unless spoken to, and you have made a vocal noise. The consequence of improper speaking is to be made speechless.”

So saying, she propped a polished wooden bar between my upper and lower incisors, propping my mouth wide open!

“Try not to break any more rules before you have had a chance to learn them, silly Twit!” The other two Twits against the wall stared in amazement at me.

No one had warned us that while Omega Alpha Iota admitted boys to their Sorority and taught them to be girls that we would, at first be so completely segregated and treated so differently from the female pledges. This whole pre-pledge protocol was coming as a ghastly series of surprises.

It was explained that all the real girl pledges had to do was demonstrate that they were ladies and refine their feminine manners and style, but that we boys had to first demonstrate that we wanted to become girls by ordeals of subjugation.

We learned that if the desire to be transgendered wasn't a burning desire within us, we would soon be sorted out. We had to prove it to them by ordeal. Boys who earned the Omega Alpha Iota pin, it seems, had to become more feminine than their genetic counterparts, the real girls.

I learned that on the national level an average of one guy per chapter survived the pre-pledge program and earned his pin as a full Sorority Sister, although at Williston the record was better.

My whole college education was dependent on my making it. If I didn't succeed in becoming Gladys there wouldn't be enough money to keep me in school. I needed the Barnes Scholarship.

As I knelt on the floor, encased in the awful Figure Former, gaping and speechless, staring at my fellow pledges in their inane uniforms, I doubted that I wanted to become a girl at all, or even to get an education in the first place!

My dressers approached with my own uniform. I was soon in it and knew surely that I didn't want to be a girl, an Omega Alpha Iota or anything but out of it all!

I had become a frilly, lacy, taffeta clad parody of a female. I rustled like leaves with each movement as the tissue taffeta of the dress scraped on the hard lace that covered my voluminous petticoats. As they tied a huge, lace edged pinafore apron over my saucy dress, I felt the stainless steel band sewn inside the waistband of the apron and heard the delicate click at the rear as they locked me into it.

With the addition of bright, garish make-up, a wig and lace cap, black leather ankle boots with four inch silver stiletto heels, I joined the other two miserable Twits against the wall, drooling from my gaping mouth. With white lace at the high, closed neck, and lace at the puffs of the long fitted sleeves, the dresses flared sharply away from our hips, the skirts lying on three layers of white petticoats, exposing our legs in their sheer, black hose.

The promenade before the pledging ceremony had already put us in our place. We had been told to present ourselves as elegant ladies, but the jeering and laughter of

the actives as they derided us for our lack of grace, slack bodies and clumsy movements, had humiliated us thoroughly. They had commented that we looked like creeps in drag, or looked like little girls playing dress up.

That however, had proved to be nothing next to the way I felt in my new costume as a Tiny Taffeta Twit. We watched as the other two pledges were brought in and transformed into little taffeta encrusted wretches. It was clear that the next few weeks were going to be hellish and I wished that I had never been so foolish as to think I ever wanted to be a girl!

I also learned that our Figure Formers would be worn continuously until we were finally past our Twit apprenticeships.

One of the dressers tied my hands behind me with the ribbon to prevent me from removing the little stick that propped my mouth open. She went down the line of us and ordered us to stand with our heels, fannies, shoulders and the backs of our heads touching the wall. We stood like frilly ramrods watching the last two terrified boys undergo their transformations into Tiny Taffeta Twits. My lower jaw ached fiercely.

Chapter 3: Mummy Gloria

“I've had two before you; two sniveling, Tiny Taffeta Twits here on their knees; two silly boys who had got it into their heads that they wanted to become girls and had pledged Omega Alpha Iota . Neither one of them made it.”

Mummy Gloria had my chin in her hand and was glaring down at me from above.

I couldn't look at her. I wasn't supposed to anyway. I was supposed to keep my eyes lowered but that is difficult when one has your chin in her locked grip and is holding your head tilted far back. I averted my eyes to one side to comply with this rule for Tiny Taffeta Twits. The stick in my teeth had turned my mouth and jaw into a single persistent pain. My backside still burned from the evening's earlier ordeals and I was breathless yet from the crushing grip of my Figure Former.

“You silly boys haven't the background and experience for the task. You get it into your head one day that you'd like to be girls, just like that! You slip into a pair of heels and slip on a dress, and Viola, you think you're some kind of Miss.

“Well, Gladys Christine, there's a bit more to it than that. If you mean to be a girl, you are going to have to prove it to me.

“There's more to it than putting on some lipstick and letting your hair grow out. It takes a change in attitude, a change in outlook, a change in how you think and feel. You start as my Tiny Taffeta Twit and I doubt you will get beyond it. Women are very special creatures and you are especially nothing. If you can live in your Figure Former and learn to live in your inane uniform without just dying of shame in it, your education as a lady will just have begun.

“We'll soon see if you really want to become Gladys Christine, but my guess is that you'll run out of here blubbing long before you do, just to escape your misery. Being a girl is harder than you think, and I mean to make you think about it. I figure you'll run soon enough. Frankly, I hope you do.”

I was crushed. I wondered why this imposing young lady hated me so much. Last summer it had all seemed so wonderful and promising. I had been told it was OK for me to want to become a girl, that my desire wasn't an illness. Then there was finding Omega Alpha Iota and Williston College and their model program for transvestitism, and finally the Scholarship.

And now here I was on my knees, choking and slobbering, crushed and rigid, and arrayed in a ridiculous parody of feminine attire hearing that I would never make it beyond this disgraceful condition by a commanding lady whom I had to call "Mummy Gloria". I felt ambushed. I knew that becoming an Omega Alpha Iota would make a lot of demands on me, but I felt challenged by that.

Now all I felt was miserable; such awfulness.

"When I was a sophomore, I drew Roderick Fenalow, 'Ramona Francine', he called himself. He really did make a passable girl, at least appearance wise, but he bluffed and blustered in the most unladylike ways. When that didn't work, he took to whining. Never made it out of Twitsville. Don't bluff and bluster, it's too masculine and real ladies don't whine. They smile! Remember that!"

I had no intention of whining, but I was choking back tears. I figured crying would get me into trouble. All the rules were in the Pledge Manual I was clutching, but I hadn't even had a chance to read it yet. I had just been told that I would fail my mission by the person in charge of me, who was supposed to show me how to succeed. I could see my education, scholarship, everything, vanishing under the cloud of this beautiful enemy in whose hands I had been thrust. I squirmed in an agony of despair as I looked away from my tormentress.

"The second one called himself 'Honorias Hinckly', if you can imagine that. I think it was 'Herman', actually. Honestly, you Twits give yourselves the most outlandish, glorious names. It's never 'Penny' or 'Jane' or 'Betty', it's always a bevy of 'Honorias', and 'Letitias', and 'Pamelas', as though some egregiously feminine name will make you into real girls. Gladys Christine, indeed! What did you call yourself before I got you, Twit?"

She stared down at me intently and I knew she meant to have an answer.

"Geg... Goggth," I gurgled, banging my useless tongue against the bar between my teeth.

"Hmm," was all she said, picking up my pledge file. "Oh, yes, Glen Groves, I see." She plucked a tissue from a box and wiped the saliva from my chin. Then she stuffed it into my open mouth. "God, you're messy. Maybe that will help. I won't have a messy Missy. You couldn't just be Glenda, could you? You had to become Gladys and then put a Christine with it, didn't you? Well, Miss Gegg Gogg, all you really are is a Tiny Taffeta Twit so you can just forget your wonderful Gladys and your glorious Christine and just be Twit. I want to hear you tell me that you are a Tiny Taffeta Twit and I want you to say it clearly."

She extracted the tissue from my mouth, freeing my tongue, and stared down at me again, seizing my chin once more.

"I... ahh... uh... I ee aa... e... ith," I gargled. It was the best I could do. She scowled menacingly at me. I tried it again, but all that came out was a slur of mangled vowels as my tongue banged against the bar in my mouth.

"Just awful, nothing more than a mangled groan. That's about all you are anyway, is a decorated groan. Well, I need to hear it from you clearly so I'll know just what you are. You don't deserve it, but I'll take the bar out of your mouth so you can tell me just what you are. After that, silence from you, except, 'yes', 'no', and 'thank you', and don't forget to call me 'Mummy Gloria'. Remember what you are and who I am, it defines our relative positions. God, but you're a wretched, useless thing. Remember that!"

She held my nose and I strained my aching jaw muscles to the limit as she extracted the bar from my teeth. She held it aloft and then dropped it into my apron pocket.

"Keep that there so it's handy if you forget yourself and start jabbering. Now, tell me what you are."

"I'm a Tiny Taffeta Twit, Mummy Gloria."

She seized my chin in her vice grip. "And you are no kind of a Gladys or any kind of Christine; not even a girl at all, are you?"

"No, Mummy Gloria."

"You are a silly, useless, absurd and meaningless thing in petticoats, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mummy Gloria."

"Now, do you know what a Tiny Taffeta Twit does, you ridiculous thing?"

"No, Mummy Gloria."

"Then you will have to learn it from me, won't you? You will have to do as you are told. You must be obedient and subservient and compliant. That's what you do, Twit. You do as you are told and you are grateful for it, aren't you?"

"Yes, Mummy Gloria."

"What else do you have to say for yourself, useless thing?"

"Thank you, Mummy Gloria."

She let go of my chin at last.

I was squirming and shaking, scared out of my wits. My hands were still bound with ribbons. I felt so helpless and demeaned.

"Whether you can actually do as I expect from you remains to be seen, but remember, if you wash out of the program, you will be on your way home on the first flight out, and still in your Twit outfit. My guess is that you'll never make it out of the program. What do you think of that?"

"Thank you, Mummy Gloria," was all I dared say.

"Good! Now get yourself out of my sight. I can take just so much of the sight of a boy-girl in all those silly frills and furbelows."

So saying, she untied the ribbon that bound my wrists and lifted the dust ruffle around the lower edge of her canopy bed and motioned to me to crawl under it. I crawled, rustling as I went until I was under the bed and she dropped the ruffle.

“Thankfully, you cease to exist altogether while you're under there, gone with the ghost wool and the monsters of the night until I summon you. Got that?”

“Yes, Mummy Gloria,” I mumbled.

“Maybe, just maybe, this one could make it... Oh, Hell, I doubt it.” I heard the light switch click and the door close as the room went dark. “Don't soil your dainties, Sweet Face, or I'll fix you so you can't.” With these terrifying words, she was gone. I sobbed myself to sleep in a morass of fatigue and self pity. Blessedly, there was a small pillow under the bed and the bed was elevated enough to allow me some wriggle room. Apparently, this stuffy confine was going to be my living quarters as her Twit. I couldn't believe that. I dozed off. Later, I heard Mummy Gloria come up and put herself to bed, but just barely.

Chapter 4: Mother Felicity

When I came in from my classes, Mother Felicity was waiting for me in the parlor. She had been housemother to the Omega Alpha Iota girls (and boys) for many years, I knew. As I came through the door and spotted her by the door to her apartment, I dropped the obligatory curtsy as she wordlessly beckoned me into her quarters.

Mother Felicity was in her middle years. She had come to the campus newly widowed. She was statuesque, beautifully formed, tall and graying. She usually wore an air of amused indulgence, but something in her demeanor said that she had her limits where foolishness was concerned. She wore a dark green suit of ribbed faille with a double breasted coat, knee length skirt and a blouse of fuchsia silk twill. This was set off with silver jewelry and mid-height pumps in the same color as her blouse. She was leaning against the doorjamb as she beckoned me with her forefinger. She wore a pleasant, knowing smile.

I figured I must have blown it somehow, right out of the starting gate and would be headed home on a plane by nightfall.

“You look tired, dear,” she began, as she closed her door behind me.

I found myself in a cozy little parlor with a lot of chintz and smarmy upholstered furniture.

“I should think you would be. The pre-pledge initiation is quite dreadful, isn't it?”

I nodded, unsure of what I was expected, or even allowed, to say.

“Do sit down, Gladys, dear. I thought we might have a cup of tea.”

Well, I thought, *the ax comes down, gently, at least*. I seated myself as comfortably as the Figure Former beneath my school frock would allow.

Mother Felicity poured and pushed a finely wrought Spode cup across the coffee table to me.

“I think you need some help, dear. I try not to meddle in pledge affairs, unless something is going terribly wrong, but I do feel that you have run up against a unique situation. I think you might need some assistance.” She pushed a plate of scones across to me, nodding.

I bit into one ravenously. Butter ran down my chin. I dabbed at it with a tea napkin.

“There are five of you in those dreadfully silly maid get-ups, this term. They really are outlandish, aren't they? Personally, I think they are really too much, but then, that's the very idea, isn't it? If I were you, I wouldn't give my appearance in it a second thought, dear. If you just ignore it, you'll have a much easier time of it.”

I hadn't expected tea, niceness, nor good advice, and I was feeling better already. This was the end of my first awful week on campus. I was in my school frock, our other costume, and I felt ridiculous even in this relatively decent outfit, but I knew that I should be upstairs even now, putting on my taffeta horror for the rest of the day.

“The Pledge Mothers are selected by lot, dear. Each active sister draws one of your names from a hat. That's how you came to have Mummy Gloria for your Mistress.”

I had wondered about that. At first, I had assumed that the other four Twits were getting about the same treatment from their Mummies as I was, but it had started to become clear that I was leading a harder life than the others, although I dared not say so, of course.

“When I first knew that Gloria Fitkin had drawn your name, I was much distressed.” She poured me a second cup of Lapsang Souchong. It was smokey and invigorating. “This morning one of the sisters informed me that Gloria has had you sleeping under her bed, in your uniform, instead of in the Twit dorm, in your nightie. Gloria seems to have been gloating over this during coffee in the student union today. I am afraid she is misusing you. I wanted you to know that you should have better treatment, or at least, no worse than the other pledges. I apologize on behalf of the Sorority.”

I nearly choked on my tea.

“Thank you, Mother Felicity, that's very kind of you,” I rejoined. My heart was really in it. Still, I wasn't really sure just where I stood.

The Housemother smoothed her skirt over her knees, leaned back on the sofa and continued: “I'm not really supposed to meddle in how the sisters conduct their program for transforming you boys into little ladies. Generally, it is well and neatly done, all spelled out in Omega Alpha Iota policy and procedure. My job here is to keep this chapter house in order, manage it and oversee its affairs. The sisters are really in charge. I am concerned with safety, security and good order. If things get out of hand, I have to step in.”

I wondered where this was leading. I sat on the front edge of my wing back chair, the Figure Former kept me from slouching, leaning back or from doing anything but perching on the front of its seat.

Mother Felicity was wonderfully maternal and commanding. “Your Mummy Gloria, it seems, has a personal and vested interest in having you fail in the program. There were two of you in the final running for the Barnes Scholarship this year, you and Gloria's second cousin, Horace. You won! Your Pledge Mother's family, it seems, is quite aware that should you leave the program, Horace will receive the scholarship by default.”

“But, Mother Felicity, that's not fair. The drawing must have been rigged!” I clapped my hand to my mouth, realizing that Twits aren't allowed to blurt things out like that. “I'm so sorry, Ma'am.”

“It's all right, Gladys, dear, in here, with me, you can be quite candid. I am happy to hear whatever you wish to say. As for the drawing of the Pledge Mothers, I am sure Gloria drew your name by happenstance, just the luck of the draw. I conducted the drawing myself. As for the outcome being unfair to you, I agree. I have phoned the Omega Alpha Iota National Headquarters today and advised them of the situation. I am sure they will order a change in Pledge Mothers for you. In the meantime, you must be very careful with Mummy Gloria. Even though she is treating you more harshly than the other pledges, you must watch your step. Do the best you can, dear.”

“Oh, dear! Oh, yes, of course. I mean, she frightens me a lot, but I'll try. Do you think it will take long?”

“A few days, at most, I should think.”

“What do you think she will do to me? Do I have to do everything?”

“Unfortunately, anything she wishes, and yes, I'm afraid you do have to do what she demands, and very meticulously. Hopefully, it won't be for very long. She has to keep it legal, no bodily harm, etc., but if I know Gloria, she will devise devilish little ways to torment you into a mistake that can be used to run you out of the program. Just try to hang in there.”

“The Manual says I mustn't complain to anyone or I will be washed out.”

“True! Twits are required to be long-suffering and be gracious about it. That is part of learning to be a woman, so you can't come to me, but Sally Winston is quite thick with Gloria and she has agreed to keep an eye open and keep me informed. If things get too far out of hand, I should know of it and can step in.

“In the meantime, you must live by the Pledge Manual. I want you to succeed, Gladys. You seem to be a fine boy and I am sure you will make a wonderful young lady, so be patient, obedient and diligent. This program is death to the male ego, which needs to be restrained anyway, if you are to be ladylike. Maybe it will help to remember that you are not alone in suffering the death of your macho self-image. You can commiserate with your four colleagues. Just don't get caught doing it.” She smiled and put down her teacup, as did I.

As I rose to curtsy, she took both my manicured hands in hers and kissed me on the cheek, gently.