

Halloween Surprise



Romana

A "New Woman" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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Halloween Surprise

By Romana

Kerry tried to keep her composure as she entered the Collins building through the automatic doors from the parking garage. She had managed well so far, but now she would encounter a lot more people. The risk of being read was the highest in the crowded first floor lobby.

As she paused before running the gauntlet, she gave herself a brief pep talk. *'Get hold of yourself, girl! Keep the pulse rate from racing. You're just like any number of females looking like this every work day. Everything is perfect: the shag hairdo, the slim, knee-length, black skirt, the hip-hugging, figure-revealing peplum jacket top, the white purse with shoulder strap, the black pumps with two-and-a-half-inch stiletto heels, and the off-black panty hose. The big nose, muscular features, and the slight above-the-waist bulge are not a problem!'*

Kerry concentrated on executing each noisy step across the ceramic-tiled floor as exactly and femininely as possible. As she reached the carpeted area, a parcel delivery man rammed a counter with his dolly, distracting her for a moment. She almost fell as she took a misstep and snagged a heel on a carpet seam, but she successfully regained her balance. A couple of men noticed, but they were just girl-watching and did not give her any special attention.

Several people were already waiting for the next elevator. Kerry cautiously looked from side to side, trying not to appear self-conscious. No one appeared to be staring.

“I wish I could get into an outfit like that,” commented an overweight woman next to her.

Kerry did not speak; she only nodded. The elevator door opened, and she walked on board at an unhurried pace. It took her two tries to press the button for the seventh floor, because her long nails got in the way.

“Thank you,” she said softly as a man held the door for her at her floor.

The big moment was but seconds away, as she approached suite number 710. The sign on the door said:

THE BARLOW COMPANY

FAR-EASTERN IMPORTS

WHOLESALE ONLY

Kerry took a breath of air; then she pushed hard, trying to keep her heels from slipping, as she opened the massive door and walked in.

“May I help you?” asked the woman in the nearest cubicle, while remaining seated behind her desk. The name plate on her desk said Janet. She was a tall blond, wearing a light-blue, shirt-dress that had many fancy buttons.

Kerry summoned her most convincing voice, “I’m Kerry Bronson. Mr. Barlow hired me for the day, to take the place of Mrs. Fielding, his secretary.”

“He didn’t tell me,” replied Janet; then she looked over her cubicle wall toward the two other women, who sat adjacent to her. “Candice, Mary, do you know anything about a Kerry Bronson coming to work here today?”

Kerry took a gulp as the two other women joined Janet. Mary was a brunette, who was wearing a brown jacket, with a white insert, and a green plaid, pleated skirt. Candice, an olive-skinned beauty of mixed ancestry, having come from Hawaii, wore a purple buttonless jacket over a red shell blouse, and a black skirt similar to Kerry’s. Kerry knew that all three of these sharply dressed women were Barbara Brier graduates; therefore, they would not be easily fooled. Being from that agency meant that they were extremely smart, hard workers. It also meant they justified a much-higher-than-average scale of pay.

“I thought the boss could not find anybody,” questioned Mary. “Especially someone familiar with these old Xerox Office Systems.”

Candice did not say anything at first, as she suspiciously looked Kerry over. “Who are you?” she finally asked.

“Kerry Bronson,” she replied as convincingly as possible.

“Where have I met you before?” asked Mary. “That face, that chin: there’s something very familiar....”

“It’s the boss,” blurted Janet, nearly choking herself; she had never suspected that cutthroat entrepreneur John Barlow had a secret feminine alter ego.

“Happy Halloween,” stated Kerry firmly, as she pivoted in a circle with her arms raised. She had switched back to the regular voice of John Barlow, the owner of the business. “I told you last Friday that I would look different today!”

“God, you actually pass,” squeaked Mary as she gave Kerry a hug and a kiss, the way women often greet each other. “You never told us that you were a crossdresser, and a very pretty one at that. Oh, this is going to be fun, because you’re going to have to eat your own words,” she added as she led Kerry to the empty cubicle of Laura Fielding, John’s secretary, who had recently left on maternity leave.

“I was only joking about being the secretary,” protested Kerry. Mary giggled as she seated Kerry behind the secretary station.

Sensing what Mary was up to, Janet turned on the word processor and announced tongue-in-cheek, “We have a lot of correspondence for you to catch up on, Kerry. We were afraid we were going to have to do it.”

“You’re late getting coffee ready,” added Candice as she joined the game the other two women were setting up. “We’ll switch our phones back here. Without all those interruptions, we might get some work done. Have fun!”

‘Wow! They’ve set me up as my own secretary. There are times when I am too clever for my own good!’

thought Kerry, as she set about to pursue the unplanned turnabout role.

While Kerry tried to figure out how to get the automatic coffee pot going, the phone rang. "Hello, this is The Barlow Company, Kerry speaking," she began in a convincing female voice, as Mary, Janet, and Candice peeked at her with big grins on their faces. "I'm sorry, Mr. Barlow is out of town for the day. Can I connect you with a sales associate instead? Yes, I will take a message."

The morning went fast for Kerry. When she grumbled as she tried to decipher John Barlow's writing, the girls only smiled. It did not take her long to learn the basics of the word processor. The phone continued to ring at the most annoying moments, but Kerry handled everything masterfully. She was on a high; then the girls invited her to lunch. The four of them turned many an eye, as they marched across a hardwood floor in a nearby cafe, their heels tapping loudly. However, everyone was perplexed by the humor, as they giggled and introduced Kerry as John Barlow's new secretary to an endless number of people.

Kerry had finished several pieces of correspondence by late afternoon. Not only was she having fun, but she had corrected many of John's errors, including some figures on an important order going to Nepal. She imagined herself scolding him, as if he and she were not the same person.

"It's time to shut down for the day," she finally announced in John's voice. "It was great, but Halloween happens only once per year," she sighed, switching back to Kerry's voice in the last four words.

"We should talk first," said Janet bluntly, as Mary locked the front door, and Candice switched the

phones to the answering machine. “We must have been blind, not noticing before what a great girl you make.”

“So....” began Kerry with a puzzled expression.

“Pardon my curiosity. Would you actually like to be Kerry, this woman whom you simulate?” asked Mary.

“Of course, to a certain degree,” replied Kerry, surprising herself. “But I’ve gone to counseling on getting a sex change, and I decided that it is just not for me. It involves too much pain and money! Besides, I would not mind getting married and having children,” Kerry added, though John had never gotten that far with any woman. As soon as his serious girlfriends had been introduced to Kerry, the relationships had always quickly dissolved.

“There is another way,” said Candice with a smile. “We did it, and so can you!”

“What did you do?” asked Kerry in John’s voice, in a confused tone.

“A few years ago, we were all like you,” continued Candice, “but we had our men’s outer body changed to match the inner woman. We’re talking about a detailed change far beyond mere hormones and reassignment surgery.”

“I’ve got to sit down,” said Kerry, as Janet offered her a chair. “It’s too astounding to believe, that any of you were ever men. I was not even suspicious of you, Janet, despite your super-aggressive, masculine personality! I know a lot of transsexuals, but only one or two can be considered passable. You three are not just passable; you are perfect-looking women. And you’re all married too!”

“I assure you that none of us remotely passed before our transformation. Mary and I still live with our wives,” explained Janet. “Candice married a man after her transition. We were conditioned to accept it either way!”

“Barbara Brier Incorporated is not just a training center for women professionals; Barbara offers a special service for the gender community that is not like any other,” added Mary. “Barbara can give you a feminine makeover similar to the one each of us had. You’re almost a girl anyway, Kerry, so why not have it all, even children!”

“How does that work, without the male organ?” asked Kerry. It did not take more than a brief glance to verify that these three women most certainly had vaginas instead of penises.

“Barbara also maintains a sperm bank for her clients,” explained Candice, “thus making it possible to be a woman and a father at the same time.”

“You don’t have to decide right now, but we do have one request,” said Janet with a big grin. “John Barlow is egotistic, disorganized, and hard to work for. You saw that for yourself when you typed his letters. Profits have been declining for months. Kerry Bronson is needed much more here than John Barlow. Please be Kerry from now on!”

“It’s true; we can’t talk to you as John,” added Mary. “Kerry is open-minded, and John is too close-minded.”

“I vote for Kerry too,” added Candice with a smile, as Kerry glanced her way.

“I don’t know what to say,” said Kerry in a voice that stumbled between male and female tones. It was

the kind of adventure that she had always dreamed about. "I'll do it," she replied in a self-surprised tone, "but I don't have much of a wardrobe."

"We need to take you on a shopping spree for some new outfits and accessories," suggested Mary. "John's new secretary needs a certain image."

Since she had essentially been preparing for the moment since she was twelve, the switch to living full-time as a woman was easy for Kerry, especially with all the new clothing the girls had helped her pick out. She concentrated on being Kerry, the pretty, well-dressed secretary, and let the girls run the office. Since she typed all the paperwork in the office and partially eavesdropped on all telephone conversations, she knew almost every detail of what was going on. By negotiating any corrections she thought were necessary, she maintained her status as the *de facto* boss. Yet the girls made all the demands of her that they had of Laura, continually reminding her that they were in charge, that Kerry was just the secretary, and that the reappearance of John would not be tolerated. It was a sophisticated game that everyone enjoyed playing, especially since profits had already doubled and would soon triple.

* * *

A few weeks later, Laura stopped by to show off her new baby boy. Each of the girls held and fussed over the baby in turn. They took Laura and the baby over to Kerry, interrupting her very busy routine.

"He's so cute," remarked Janet as she almost shoved the baby into Kerry's arms.

Laura obviously did not suspect who Kerry was, and Kerry forced herself to maintain her adopted role. "What a darling baby," she said as her voice

reached its highest possible pitch. Her glum facial expression was at odds with her words, but Laura did not notice.

“John is lucky to find a replacement for me,” admitted Laura, “because he lives up to his reputation of being hard to work for. He’s sort of a spoiled rich boy, but he did pay well. You should be happy to know, Miss Bronson, that I have found another position. I will not be returning after my maternity leave.”

“You need to get back to work,” whispered Janet to Kerry, as the girls walked Laura to the door. They slowly approached the door, as the four of them spent another ten minutes saying goodbye. Janet could not let Laura go without whispering their secret to her.

“Really?” questioned Laura as she stared at Kerry with an astonished gaze. “Don’t work too hard, **Kerry** dear,” she blurted in the midst of a train of giggles. She laughingly left the office.

“Why, Kerry, you’re crying,” remarked Mary after Laura had left. They could still hear Laura’s muffled laughter out in the hallway, as she waited for an elevator.

“I’m sorry that John is such an awful person,” muttered Kerry, as she struggled to hold back her tears.

* * *

As the end of July neared, Kerry was ready to go to Barbara Brier, because she was tired of all the energy it took to maintain her illusion, while working at a job that was in itself very tiring.

As the last day of work ended, Kerry shut down the word processor and abruptly left her chair and pivoted on her high heels, causing the full-cut skirt of her red dress to raise high into the air. “Tomorrow, I’m off to Barbara Brier. I finally completed all the pre-transformation paperwork. I don’t think I need any video clips to guide the transformation, because Kerry has already been well-defined. It’s really been great, but now comes the big moment: the emergence of the real Kerry. I can’t thank you girls enough.”

“You may regret those words,” replied Janet, “because we have a long list of demands, starting with the pre-transformation shower for you at my house.”

Before Kerry could speak, Mary added, “And we have a series of amendments to the profile you’ve laid out for Barbara in your transformation plan.”

“We are offering you a rare chance to see life completely from a woman’s point of view!” emphasized Candice.

“I do not think I am going to like this....” began Kerry as she placed her hands in the large pockets of her dress.

“You’re going to put us in charge for the next two months anyway,” stated Janet. “We want you to extend that period to two years or more, during which period we will run the business, and you will be our secretary and take orders from us!”

As a look of dismay came over Kerry, Mary continued, “You will put your house, your fancy car, your expensive possessions, and all your money into trust. You will get an apartment, in which you will live on a salary befitting your new status in life. We will pay for the apartment while you are in transition.

After that, you will be on your own, living a moderate-income woman's life."

"What if I rebel against such an arrangement?" asked Kerry, doubting that she was in the mood for such a turnabout game.

"Barbara will condition you to obey us, based on a special code phrase," explained Janet. "If that fails, we can send you back so Barbara can make you forget that you ever were a man. You can be made to believe that you were born as Kerry Bronson, and that being a secretary is your whole life."

"Many of Barbara's clients ask for temporary amnesia, so that they can fully savor their new persona," added Candice.

"That's very clever, a great opportunity for you three," began Kerry seriously in John's voice, "but what's in it for me?"

"The bottom line is profits," explained Janet as she produced the paperwork for Kerry to read and sign. "If business fails to go up by less than five percent per month for any month during the first two years, you will be free and clear of our contract. Furthermore, starting with the last quarter during the two year period, if profits double in the previous quarter, you will be required to continue in your secretarial role for the entire next quarter, up to an additional two years."

"In other words," added Mary, "we will gleefully try to make it worth your while to endure our little, educational game as long as four years."

"And if you can't take the heat during the contractual period, you can always get a job with another firm," joked Candice; "everyone needs a good secretary!"

“We expect you to take us seriously and live up to the terms of our contract,” said Janet sternly. “If you don’t perform as specified and we can’t control you, we can fire you, in which case the business will default to us, and you will really be a girl in trouble, at least for the remainder of the contractual term!”

“I accept your challenge,” accepted Kerry gracefully, “because I do not think you girls can successfully pull this stunt off.”

* * *

Kerry arrived at the cluster of buildings that was Barbara Brier Incorporated, late in the afternoon. She had driven from her cheap one-bedroom apartment in her cheap, used Toyota Corolla. She was wearing the same outfit that she had worn to work last Halloween. She had followed the directions: bring only the clothes you are wearing and the completed paperwork to entrance T-100, and leave the car running. A pretty blond girl, who was wearing green coveralls, drove her car around a corner and out of sight.

Inside the door, a receptionist named Marty greeted her. “My, most of our clients do not arrive looking already transformed,” she commented as she pressed a button in her console. “An escort will be here shortly to take you to in-processing.”

Kerry’s escort was a striking redhead named Carol. She wore an extremely fancy blue dress with matching high-heeled pumps. The front and rear collars of the dress were bow-shaped. It was nearly off-the-shoulder, being held in place only by fancy, short sleeves. The outfit complimented Carol’s ample supply of curves, which reminded Kerry of Janet, Mary, and Candice back at the office.

“Are you a graduate of this...?” questioned Kerry weakly as she followed the woman downstairs to a connecting underground corridor.

“I’m in transition. Your wondering if I used to be man,” sensed Carol, “they tell me that I was, but I can’t remember, and I’m sure I never really wanted to be a man; I like the way I look. Induced amnesia is part of the transformation process. We work for Barbara Brier while we attend her classes and undergo conditioning. My memory will be restored in two weeks, when I graduate.”

“I’ve heard about this amnesia,” commented Kerry. “Apparently, some opt for it permanently.”

“Requests like that are usually no longer granted,” said Carol, as they passed a cleaning woman in the corridor, who was working in a fancy strapless evening gown and high heels. “They teach us about the difficulties of being a woman all the time,” explained Carol. “We even purposely have small restrooms here, to educate us on the long lines of the real world.”

“You were saying that amnesia requests likely won’t be granted,” said Kerry, as she continued the previous conversation track.

“After two of Barbara’s clients were raped and murdered,” explained Carol, “it was obvious that it was dangerous. Remembering their male lives might not have helped, but we can’t be sure. It made Barbara so mad that she used her connections to force the authorities to track down, arrest, and prosecute the offenders as fast as possible.”

“What kind of connections?” questioned Kerry.

“I don’t know, but she seems to be a very powerful woman!” replied Carol proudly.

“Was she once a man too?” asked Kerry.

“So we think, but no one knows. She is a master of disguise. No one here has apparently ever seen her as having the same appearance. There is a rumor that she is exceedingly beautiful and successfully passes herself off as one or more of her own staff. There are more stories circulating about Barbara than we can count.”

“You could be Barbara Brier!” blurted Kerry.

“You would never know,” replied Carol seriously.

They passed by the large glass windows of the office area of the transformation complex. There were many offices, full of beautiful, well-dressed women performing a variety of clerical tasks. Carol assured Kerry that every one of them was a former male in transition.

Carol led Kerry to a door marked:

Muriel Winston

Transition Coordinator

After a quick knock, Muriel’s pretty secretary ushered Kerry in and left.

“I see that Marty was right; you look very good. However, there is still much room for improvement,” said Muriel, who was a pretty brunette, wearing a fancy two-piece black suit with a short skirt. Kerry was ready to shake hands, but Muriel embraced and kissed her instead. “Welcome to Barbara Brier. We

treat each other as women here, as open and caring individuals.”

“You also used to be a man?” asked Kerry nervously, sensing that it was not an appropriate question.

“Staff members personal and previous lives are not open for discussion. I am here to process your paperwork and set you up in your transition program. You realize that these changes will be irreversible.”

“I hope so,” replied Kerry.

“You also realize that we will transform and condition you to be a woman, not a man masquerading as a woman. Our clients do not practice any kind of purposeful outing to expose Barbara Brier Incorporated or their former lives.”

“That is the way it should be,” Kerry agreed.

“That is not to say you will be submissive or content to be relegated to a second-rate status. Barbara Brier graduates, both genetic females and transformed males, are on the front lines in the battle for equality. Since this training mostly starts our clients out in lowly female occupations, there is no way to go but up. Recently, one of our transformed-male graduates got elected to the U.S. Senate, while two more got elected to the House of Representatives.”

“How will I break the news to my parents, or to my sister and her husband?” wondered Kerry. “I practically forgot about them in all this excitement.”

“We can condition them to accept you, to see that you really have not changed. We even handle the intervention.