



Reluctant Press presents:

Olivia Mackenzie

Briana Vermont



A 'HER TV' E-BOOK

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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The Last Will and Testament Of **Olivia Mackenzie**

By Briana Vermont

Illustrations by David McKinley

Chapter 1 The Reading of the Will

“This is the last will and testament of Olivia Rose Bennington, nee Mackenzie, dated this 18th day of May...”

The executor of the will finally began reading, after what had turned out to be a long, uncomfortable day for Leslie. The invitation to the reading had arrived two days earlier, requesting Leslie’s presence. Leslie had no idea why, and hadn’t the slightest idea who Olivia Bennington might be. Still, there was only one reason to be invited to the reading of a will that Leslie had ever heard of.

“Maybe she’s some long lost relative, with a bundle of cash for me,” thought Leslie. That would be some awfully good luck. Unfortunately, that was not the kind of luck Leslie had ever experienced.

It seemed rude to just show up for the will, and so Leslie had dressed in somber black and attended the funeral earlier that day. Leslie seldom attracted much attention, but for some reason today many strange glances had been turned in Leslie’s direction, as if asking “Who is this odd person anyway?” Leslie was never very good at small talk, especially with total strangers, and so had stayed out of the conversation groups. The result was one very long, awkward day.

Leslie had tried to stay at the back of the room, but instead had been ushered to the very front row. Leslie sat with what must have been immediate family members. Correction - immediate family members and their lawyers. Everyone else in the room appeared to have arrived with legal representation. Leslie sat with arms and legs crossed, trying to shrink into non-existence, suffering the questioning glares in embarrassment. This was likely a huge mistake, and Leslie had never been intended to be invited. Leslie just wanted to stand and run.

The mood in the room was tense. Everyone listened to the reading of the will with an attentiveness that bordered on nerve-racking. The will listed various items and amounts, naming friends and relatives of the deceased who were destined to receive them. Some smiled when they learned of their new possessions, others frowned. One woman received £5,000 pounds and was ecstatic. A man who was told he would receive £100,000 pounds actually stood and stormed from the room. Leslie was a wreck, thinking, "Please let this end soon!"

Mr. Roberts, the executor, continued to read, "After distribution of these proceeds to the individuals so named, one half of my remaining estate is to go to Havisham Women's College."

The woman sitting next to Leslie let out a gasp, then barely restrained a gleeful laugh. "Obviously, she must be from the college," thought Leslie. The man sitting on her other side, likely her lawyer, attempted to restrain the woman's somewhat inappropriate delight.

"The remainder of the estate," continued Mr. Roberts once the woman was quiet "is to be divided equally between my granddaughter, Olivia Mackenzie Spencer, and Leslie Avery Scarlett..."

The room erupted at this. Everyone was standing, shouting. Everyone demanded to know, who was this woman! What right had she to any part of the estate, let alone a full quarter? Even the granddaughter had only received a quarter! Leslie remained seated, trying to look even smaller.

"Would you all, please, sit down and remain quiet!" shouted Mr. Roberts. "There is still more to the will!"

People eventually quieted, and returned to their seats. "As I was saying," Mr. Roberts continued. "The remainder of the estate is to be divided equally between my granddaughter, Olivia Mackenzie Spencer, and Leslie Avery Scarlett, on the condition that they attend and graduate from Havisham Women's College. Tuition and living expenses to be covered as per Appendix I."

Leslie sat in stunned silence. The young woman sitting to Leslie's right, however, felt no such restriction.

"There's a condition on my inheritance?" she yelled. "She was my grandmother, I'm her only heir! I'll fight this! I don't even know this Leslie person, what gives her any right? She isn't even here!" Leslie shrank into the seat even further, pretending to be invisible.

"There is one more item to be distributed," said Mr. Roberts. "It is a personal letter from Olivia Bennington to Leslie Scarlett. Before she died, Mrs. Bennington asked me to

read it to Leslie personally in the presence of her granddaughter and Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, the representative from Havisham, and so I must ask everyone else to leave the room."

"Are you deaf?" asked the young woman. "I said, she isn't even here! Is she here? She isn't even here!"

Everyone in the room stood, and slowly left the room by the rear doors. Finally there were only five people in the room with the executor – Olivia and her lawyer, Mrs. Gordon-Smythe and her lawyer, and Leslie, seated between the two. Remaining hidden really was no longer an option!

"My dearest Leslie," Mr. Roberts began reading from the letter. "It must be a bit of a surprise to you, finding yourself here at the reading of my will. Your grandmother died the year you were born, so it's entirely likely that you have never even heard my name. You were named after your grandmother, Leslie Dianne Avery, just as my granddaughter Olivia was named after me. Your grandmother and I met our first day at Havisham Women's College, and we became inseparable friends immediately. Those days at Havisham were so special to us both. Even after graduation, when Leslie went her way and I went mine, we remained in close contact. My biggest regret in life is that I haven't kept contact with you following her death. By now you are a full-grown woman, and I've missed an opportunity to see you grow in your grandmother's image.

"Leslie, my fondest wish is to see that you and my Olivia meet, and that you two girls attend Havisham together just as your grandmothers did. To know that the names "Olivia Mackenzie" and "Leslie Avery" will be heard again throughout those halls, your laughter echoing ours from so many years ago, would make my life complete.

"It's signed Olivia Mackenzie Bennington," he finished as he folded the letter.

"Just great, very sweet," said Olivia. "So where does that leave us, seeing as the girl didn't even show up?"

Mr. Roberts pointed the letter toward Leslie, seated between Mrs. Gordon-Smythe and Olivia, still attempting to burrow backward into the overstuffed chair. When Leslie refused to move he let out a small cough, and shook the paper in Leslie's direction. Leslie reluctantly stood, and accepted the letter.

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe and Olivia stared at Leslie. "Who are you?" asked Olivia. "Is this person with you?" she asked Mrs. Gordon-Smythe.

"No," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, astonished. "But I assumed... not with you either?"

"Ladies," said Mr. Roberts, then with a nod to their lawyers, "gentlemen, may I introduce you to Leslie Avery Scarlett."

Stunned silence filled the room. Then Olivia laughed. And laughed. And continued to laugh like she might never stop, as everyone else in the room remained silent. As quietly as everyone else remained silent, that was how loudly Olivia laughed. Leslie simply stood, holding the letter, feeling ridiculous.

Olivia's laughter eventually wound down, and she fanned herself as she regained her composure. "Oh, that was wonderful," she said. "What a good laugh. But now, if we can be serious for a moment, I hope you haven't been counting your good fortune, because there is no way in hell that you will be getting a dime of my grandmother's money."

Mr. Roberts spoke up. "Olivia, obviously we need to discuss this, but your grandmother's will specifically leaves a quarter of her estate to Leslie Avery Scarlett. This is Leslie Avery Scarlett!"

"*This,*" replied Olivia with sarcastic emphasis on the word, "is a guy!" Leslie tried to make himself invisible, but this was no longer possible. He was the focus of all attention in the room.

"Miss Spencer is correct," her lawyer chimed in. "The deceased intended to leave a portion of her estate to a female Leslie Scarlett. As it is now obvious that this woman does not exist, the portion willed to Leslie Scarlett must go to my client."

"Not so," added the lawyer for Havisham. "Leslie Scarlett's inheritance must be divided proportionately according to the will between Miss Spencer, and Havisham Women's College. Havisham is entitled to two thirds, the remaining third to Miss Spencer."

"There's something wrong with your math, buddy," said Olivia. "It says you get half, not two thirds!"

"THE WILL," shouted the executor, trying to gain attention back from the argument that had filled the room, "says nothing about the deceased's expectation of Leslie Avery Scarlett's gender! It simply says the name, never anything about being female."

"Are you stupid?" yelled Olivia. "That letter you read has all kinds of crap in it about 'you are a woman' and 'you two girls'!"

"The letter does not form part of the will," the executor told her. "Within the will itself, Leslie Avery Scarlett is referred to by name only. I have checked closely, and there is nothing to indicate Leslie's gender. So if we can get past that, I would like to deal with the question of the conditions of the will."

"Yes," said Olivia. "There's no way I should have to meet any conditions! She was my grandmother! That is my money!"

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Roberts, "you must meet the conditions or you will not receive a thing. You therefore must attend Havisham, and will not receive the bulk of your inheritance until you graduate. There is no point in arguing this. What we need to decide is, what is to be done about the conditions placed on Mr. Scarlett. I would like to suggest that a suitable men's college be selected, where he can attend in order to fulfill his conditions. I would like to suggest Middenhale Men's College. Havisham and Middenhale have had a long association, and I feel this would dovetail with the deceased's wishes quite neatly."

"Yeah, whatever," said Olivia, but then her lawyer leaned toward her and whispered in her ear. Olivia immediately perked up. "Oh, wait! The will says we BOTH have to go to Havisham, and we BOTH have to graduate! If I have to go to Havisham Women's College, then so does HE! And if he doesn't, the money all goes to me."

"That is completely out of the question," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "We are a women's college. We have never accepted a male student, and never will. Our charter is very specific."

"You may want to consult with your lawyer on the legality of that position," said Mr. Roberts. "As you well know, Middenhale Men's College lost a court battle to exclude women a few years ago, and now has around 4% female enrollment. There is even talk of changing the name to simply Middenhale College."

"That was a case of discrimination against women," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe.

"And this is discrimination against men," Mr. Roberts replied.

"Hey, why are you helping him anyway?" Olivia questioned.

"I am not 'helping him'. I am representing the estate of your grandmother, and attempting to interpret her wishes. I spoke with her often over the past few months. She was very passionate about her old friend, and their days at Havisham. She wanted desperately for the two of you to have that same experience. Obviously she was mistaken, but I'm quite sure had she known Leslie was a man, she would still have wanted to help the grandson of a dear friend."

"Help, maybe," said Olivia. "But not give him a quarter of her estate!"

"Nevertheless," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, "Havisham will not accept a male student. We will fight it in the courts if we must."

"I must point out," said Mr. Roberts, "Mr. Scarlett must fulfill the requirements of the will in order to receive his inheritance. If Havisham Women's College interferes with his ability to do so through a prolonged court battle, then win or lose, they may just forfeit their portion of the estate. It is a well established point of law, that one heir cannot profit by interfering with another heir's lawful attempt to fulfill conditions placed upon them in a will. In addition, Mr. Scarlett would then have every right to sue you for his losses."

"That's blackmail!" declared Mrs. Gordon-Smythe.

"No, that's the law," Mr. Roberts told her.

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe squirmed in her chair. "Well, I have no problem with your earlier suggestion. He can attend Middenhale instead."

Olivia jumped up, offended at not having been listened to for at least a minute. "You may have no problem, but I still do! He attends Havisham Women's College with me, or else he's out of the will!"

"If he wishes to attend Havisham, we will take it to court. I'm sorry, but I'm sure the Board will back me on this. Havisham will maintain the appearance of a women's college."

"Only the appearance of a women's college?" asked Mr. Roberts, suddenly inspired.

"Just a figure of speech," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, slightly confused. "Why, what do you mean?"

"We may have the basis of a compromise," said Mr. Roberts. "What if he attends Havisham, as a female student? Havisham would maintain the appearance of a women's college, but Mr. Scarlett would have the opportunity to complete his degree requirements, and the conditions of the will, and the deceased's wishes."

"Don't be ridiculous," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe dismissively. Then when Mr. Roberts did not change his expression she continued, "You can't be serious! The idea is preposterous, and the very suggestion is in the worst of taste."

"But I am serious," said Mr. Roberts. "This idea has the potential to satisfy all parties. Stop just a minute, and give it some consideration."

"No really," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "I mean, just look at him. There's nothing feminine about him."

"You just let me worry about that," said Mr. Roberts. "All I'm suggesting is if, by September, we can have him appear female, that you allow him to attend Havisham."

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe looked at her lawyer, but all he did was shrug. Mrs. Gordon-Smythe rolled her eyes at his lack of assistance, shook her head as if to swirl and mix this new idea thoroughly throughout her mind, and then finally answered.

"Fine," she said. "He may attend Havisham as a female student, but if he is found out we would have no option but to expel him. That should avoid any legal argument that we unfairly interfered."

Olivia laughed. "Fine by me! I'll let everyone know who he is on the first day! He'll be out of there before the first class is over!"

"If you were to do so," Mr. Roberts informed her, "it would most definitely be interpreted as interfering in his attempt to fulfill the conditions of the will. In that case I would have no choice but to strike *you* from the will."

Olivia looked at her lawyer. He nodded in agreement with Mr. Roberts's statement.

"I have only one condition," said Mrs. Gordon-Smythe. "All dormitory rooms at the college are double occupancy. Havisham will not stand for some innocent, unsuspecting young woman finding herself flatmate to Mr. Scarlett. As Miss Spencer is already aware of the situation, I see the best alternative to be that the two of them should be flatmates."

"I have no problem with that," replied Mr. Roberts. "That would be completely in keeping with the deceased's wishes."

"No!" said Olivia. "This is ridiculous. I am most certainly not going to be flatmates with him! I'm sorry, but you can't attend Havisham, you can't graduate, and you can't have any of my money!"

Olivia's lawyer leaned over, and whispered in her ear. Whatever he said obviously infuriated her, but she eventually said, "Fine. You can be my stupid flatmate."

"No!" cried out Leslie, finally finding his voice. "She's right, it is ridiculous. You expect me to dress like a girl, pass for a girl for, for, how long is the degree requirement?"

"Havisham is a four year program," Mrs. Gordon-Smythe informed him.

"For four years!? No, I can't do that!"

"It would only need to be during class," Mr. Roberts told him. "Evenings, weekends, holidays would all be your own, to dress as you wish."

"No! I'm sorry, but why should I suffer such humiliation, for a dead women I never even knew?" Leslie saw the shocked look on Olivia's face and added, "Oh, I'm sorry! Really, that was insensitive of me. I'm sure your grandmother was very nice."

Mr. Roberts waited for him to stop. "You don't have to do this. But the other parties have agreed, and if you refuse there is nothing I can do to help you. You can try to fight it in court, but it could take years. If they had continued to refuse to allow you entry the estate would have paid your legal expenses, but as they have agreed to accept you, on terms the estate agrees are reasonable, you will be on your own."

"Still," said Leslie, "no amount of money is worth that!"

"Your portion would be one quarter of the estate, approximately £40 million pounds."

* * *

Following Leslie's agreement to the conditions, everyone stood and the discussion broke into small groups, none of which actually contained Leslie.

"Stupid git," Olivia said to her lawyer. "Wants to be *my* flatmate, he won't last a day before his ugly face gives him away, but then what happens to my reputation? Stupid, ugly little troll. There is no way he'll get one cent of my money."

"Just remember," her lawyer reminded her, "You cannot be seen to be the one who outs him. I recommend you decide right now to help him, in any way possible in this deception. If it is in any way tied back to you when he is exposed, your inheritance could be forfeit."

"Help him? I don't think so," said Olivia. Grudgingly she added, "I won't give him away, though. I'll be good, play by the rules. But I sure don't have to like him."

"I wouldn't worry," her lawyer told her. "I doubt he'll even show up."

Olivia laughed. "You're right! Just look at him. There's no way he would ever have the nerve."

Nearby, the executor and Mrs. Gordon-Smythe were having a discussion as well.

Mrs. Gordon-Smythe was saying, "All I can say is, he had better not show up looking like a baboon in a dress! I don't want Havisham to become a laughing stock. I would say, in order to remain in school, he is going to need one hell of a makeover."

"That's a good idea," responded Mr. Roberts. "I'll look into that. I was actually surprised that you agreed to the proposal."

"Oh, I have no doubt it will end in disaster. Humiliating for him, but still, this seems the quickest way to a resolution, doesn't it? With an increased share for Havisham, of course. If the deception lasts a day I'll be shocked."

Leslie tried to join the various conversations, but decided he wouldn't enjoy them. Instead, he slipped out of the room and went home.

Chapter 2 Sixty Days to a New You

Two weeks had passed since the funeral, and the reading of the will. Leslie had barely thought about that day since. Whenever he did, it gave him an odd feeling as if it were not completely real. It was a freakish dream to be ignored, and possibly best forgotten. So he was surprised to find a Rolls waiting for him outside his South Kensington flat one morning, waiting to take him to a meeting with Mr. Roberts, the executor of Olivia Bennington's will. The Rolls took him far out into the countryside.

"What is this place?" asked Leslie, looking about the home's front entry with eyes wide.

"This is Mrs. Bennington's summer home," answered Mr. Roberts as he ushered Leslie from the front entry, through the grand home to a study overlooking the gardens. "She also owned apartments in London, but spent most of her later years here."

"She lived here alone?"

"Certainly not," answered Mr. Roberts, seating himself in a large leather chair after seeing Leslie seated in one of the same. "She had a full complement of staff. A cook and housekeeper, groundskeeper, butler and driver, and a fulltime nurse for the last few months of her life."

Leslie looked around the study, at the dark oak paneling and heavy furniture. "It doesn't look to have much feminine appeal."

"This was her late husband's study, and remains much as he left it," Mr. Roberts explained, then turned to business. "Leslie, I've brought you here to find out what progress you've made toward fulfilling the conditions of your inheritance."

"Oh," said Leslie. He likely should have expected this, but somehow had not. After a few moments he continued, "Well, nothing, really."

"What, nothing at all?" said Mr. Roberts in surprise.

"Oh, well, when I say nothing, I mean obviously I've done something." Leslie tried to think of anything he might have done, when he suddenly remembered. "Mrs. Gordon-Smythe, from the funeral? You know, from Havisham? She contacted me. She sent me a form, an application, for Havisham."

"Yes?" prompted Mr. Roberts.

"Well, I filled it in, and returned it."

"Very good," said Mr. Roberts encouragingly. "Did anything come of the application?"

"Apparently, Mrs. Gordon-Smythe expedited it. I received an acceptance letter the following day, by express post."

"Well that's excellent," said Mr. Roberts. "Excellent results. Accepted at Havisham Women's College. Congratulations."

"Um, thank you," replied Leslie in embarrassment.

"Now Leslie, have you given any thought to how you will need to appear as a female student?" asked Mr. Roberts bluntly.

"Yes, yes. Of course," Leslie replied with some hesitation. Mr. Roberts simply nodded, encouraging him to continue. Feeling ridiculous he continued, "I thought I could buy, you know, a, um, a dress?"

"Yes?" prompted Mr. Roberts.

"And," Leslie stopped to swallow. "And, I could wear a wig?"

Mr. Roberts started to frown.

"And... makeup." Leslie stopped.

Mr. Roberts took a deep breath, then closed his eyes and rubbed his forehead while letting it out before speaking.

"Leslie, I'm afraid you're not taking this at all seriously."

"I am," replied Leslie. "It's just... I mean, classes begin in September, and that's almost two months away. I need some time to think, that's all. I'll be ready."

"You've had two weeks already, and all you've come up with is a wig and a dress. Really, how much further do you think you'll be by September?"

"That's not fair," said Leslie. "This isn't easy. Why do you want this so much anyway? What's in it for you?"

"I'm not in it for myself," said Mr. Roberts. "It would be far easier for me to simply cut you from the will, and I doubt any court would fault me for doing so. Without a vast reservoir of funds for legal fees, there would be little you could do about it. However, as I explained at the reading of the will, I represent the estate, and therefore the late Mrs. Bennington. It is my job to see through her final wishes with respect to distribution of her property. Her greatest wish was that you and her granddaughter should attend Havisham together, so much so that she made it conditional on both your inheritances.

"I don't know how that might have changed if she had known you were a man. She may have dropped the conditions, or reduced your inheritance, or she may have dropped you entirely from the will. There is no way for us to know now. At this point, all that is important is that we have an agreement that you will be allowed to attend Havisham, as a female student, and so two months from now you need to be a female student."

"Mr. Roberts," Leslie said, overwhelmed, "I just don't think I can go through with this. I really can't do it!"

Mr. Roberts looked at Leslie with compassion. "Leslie, I know, this is not going to be easy, and I don't expect you to do it alone. I've brought you out here to meet someone who I believe can be of great assistance to you."

Mr. Roberts stood, and went to the door. He opened it and gestured, "Miss Clemens, could you come in now?"

A young woman entered, and smiled at Leslie. She may have been withholding a laugh, but Leslie wasn't sure. Leslie stood to greet her.

“Leslie, I would like you to meet April Clemens. April is a professional lifestyle coach. Leslie, I would like you to come live here for the rest of the summer, to work with April. She can be of tremendous help in your change.”

“I’m not sure I know what you’re saying,” said Leslie. “What kind of change are you suggesting?”

April looked Leslie up and down. “I’d like to suggest a diet and exercise program. We can work on reducing your waist. I think we should try teeth whitening, and definitely laser eye surgery to eliminate the glasses.”

“That’s it? Just diet and exercise?” said Leslie incredulously.

“Don’t forget the teeth whitening and laser eye surgery,” April reminded him, nodding in agreement. “Those changes will make a big difference.”

“I can’t afford any of this,” said Leslie.

“The will allows for the release of any funds deemed necessary to maintain the enrollment of both you and Miss Spencer at Havisham. I see this expenditure as absolutely necessary,” explained Mr. Roberts.

Oh, okay,” said Leslie.

“Well, if we’re all in agreement,” said Mr. Roberts. “Leslie, perhaps you would like a tour of the house and grounds? I have to head back to the city, but perhaps April will show you around. She can introduce you to the staff, and show you to your room. Right now, would you mind leaving us for just a moment? We need to discuss some details of her employment.”

Leslie stepped into the hallway, leaving Mr. Roberts alone with April. April spoke first.

“It’s going to take a lot more than just teeth whitening and laser eye surgery to turn him into a college girl!” she said as soon as the door was closed. “Why would you tell me to say that? There are at least twenty other things we’ll need him to agree to!”

“One step at a time, Miss Clemens, one step at a time.”

Day 1

“That... must... be... twenty minutes!” Leslie huffed. He had been on the stationary bicycle for, well, not quite twenty minutes.

“Almost there, stay strong!” April encouraged him. “Nineteen and forty-five, don’t give up! Fifty... fifty-five... done!”

Leslie stopped peddling and slumped forward on the bike. After catching his breath he rolled off the bike, with April’s help to support him on his now rubber-like legs.

“Aah, ha, that hurts,” he complained.

“You did really well,” April said positively. “Just don’t stop moving, okay? Stand up, keep moving so you don’t cramp up.” April assisted Leslie to walk around the workout room for a couple of minutes, stopping to stretch his legs once in a while.

“Right, now I think you’re ready to move on,” April told him. “We’re going to be doing some exercises to strengthen and taper your waist. Okay now, let your arms hang from

your shoulders, and rotate at the waist. Yes, that's right, arms loose, let them swing. Think about the muscles at the side, between your ribs and your hips. Feel them stretch."

Leslie continued the exercise as April watched, encouraging him and making suggestions.

"What did you mean when you said these exercises would taper my waist?" he asked as he continued his rotations.

"Okay enough rotations, let's try some crunches using the ball, okay?" April assisted Leslie to lie back on the big ball and begin the next exercise before answering his question.

"You may have noticed, a woman's waist is not like a man's," she explained, as she helped him to not slip off the ball. "We want your waist to be especially narrow, which is going to take some work. But just as important, a man's waist is just above his hips, where a woman's waist is actually a couple of inches higher, just below her ribs. We're going to selectively target the muscles we train, to narrow your body below the ribs, then taper out to your hips."

"You've got to be joking," said Leslie. "You're going to move my waist? You can do that?"

"Dunno," answered April. "I've never tried it before. But that's the theory. The bicycling will strengthen your legs, waist exercises will taper your middle, and hopefully we can avoid any effect at all on your bottom."

"Why is that? My bottom is already perfect?"

"Not really," replied April, perhaps with too much honesty. "But I'm hoping we can fatten it up."

"What?" said Leslie, coming to a complete stop in the middle of a crunch. "You want me to have a fat bum?"

"Don't stop," April told him. When he resumed crunches she continued, "Women have fat bums. Yours is too flat right now, but don't worry."

"I don't want a fat bum," Leslie complained. "Aren't all women always trying to get rid of their fat bum?"

"Yes. But that's because they all have one. If you didn't have one you would stick out. Or not stick out, I guess. Okay, enough crunches, stand up."

April helped Leslie to a standing position, then picked up two hula-hoops and handed him one.

"Have you ever tried one of these?" she asked, slipping the hoop over her head, then giving it a spin at her waist. April had no trouble keeping it spinning.

Leslie slipped the hoop around his waist, and tried to get it spinning. Twice around was all he could manage, then it would clatter to the floor.

"Don't give up," April said as her hoop continued to spin around her waist and hips in a slow, hypnotic curve. "You just need to get the rhythm. It's the same speed as perfect sex."

Leslie tried for another few minutes, almost getting the rhythm a couple of times but not quite.

"That's alright," said April, finally letting her hoop come to a stop. "We've got all summer, you'll get it. I think that's enough for today, why don't you go have a shower?"

"We're done?" asked Leslie.

"Sure," replied April. "We've been at this for over an hour, I'd say that's enough."

"Oh, okay," said Leslie hesitantly. "It's just, I thought we would do some upper body-work. I've been meaning to work on my arms a bit, and I thought this was the perfect opportunity."

"Oh, gosh," said April. "I'm sorry, but no, absolutely not. I forgot to tell you, we need to reduce your arms and shoulders. So, from now on, please try to use your arms as little as possible."

"Wait, you want to *reduce* my arms?" Leslie said, incredulous.

"And your shoulders," added April. "And even your fingers. Can you open a twist-top bottle?"

"Of course," said Leslie.

"We're going to have to reduce your fingers until you can't. So from now on, just let your arms hang at your sides, leave your hands open and loose. Try not to pick anything up, no lifting, got it?"

"April, this is getting to be too much," Leslie said, clearly becoming distraught. "You want me to have a narrow, tapered waist, a big bum, weak arms, useless fingers? You're trying to turn me into some kind of freak."

"Hey, welcome to the female species!" laughed April. "Seriously, just relax, Leslie! You are going to be in the best shape of your life when we're done. You'll have strong legs, amazing abs, not an ounce of flab on you. Except maybe your butt. And don't forget, later this morning we're getting your teeth whitened, and this afternoon is your laser eye surgery. You are going to look amazing, male or female!"

"But this is all so, weird. Reshaping my body, weakening my arms..."

"Hey, nothing we are doing here is permanent. You can opt out any time, go to the gym, build up massive biceps!"

Leslie started to feel better, but still...

"So this afternoon, when I go out, what do you expect me to wear?"

"Oh, I don't know. Jeans, I guess? And what do you usually wear? A T-shirt?"

"Really?" said Leslie. "I thought you would want me in a dress or something."

"Girls don't always wear dresses!" laughed April. "Sometimes we do just wear jeans, and yes, even T-shirts. But Leslie, you're not going out as a girl. Not until you feel ready. This whole process is up to you. I'm here to help you, but no one here is going to make you do something that you're not ready to do."

"You don't know what a relief it is to hear you talk this way!" said Leslie.

"Good, I'm glad," April told him. "Now, do you feel ready for a shower?"

"Definitely," said Leslie.

"Then scoot!" April chased him from the workout room. After Leslie had left, Mr. Roberts entered and approached April.

"One step at a time, Miss Clemens?" he asked.

"One step at a time, Mr. Roberts!"

Day 3

"Leslie, that session was brilliant!" April told him as she walked him back to his room. "I'm seeing such improvement in you, in just a few days!"

"I know, I really felt as if I was getting the idea of the hula hoop, too," he replied. "I really had it going for a while, didn't I?"

"You really did!" said April. "That's an important part of your waist strengthening, so maybe you can practice on your own, okay? It will also loosen up your hips, which will be important in disguising your walk."

The pair arrived at Leslie's room and Leslie entered, heading toward the shower. However, April did not remain outside but rather followed him into the room.

"Oh, April!" exclaimed Leslie when he realized he was not alone. "I didn't expect you to follow me. Sorry, the place is a bit of a mess."

"Yes, I noticed," said April, her arms folded in disapproval. "Leslie, you haven't even made your bed today!"

"Yes, well," Leslie said haltingly. "They do have a housekeeper here. She should get to that soon enough."

"Oh, isn't that nice," said April sarcastically. "And who will make your bed for you when you're away at Havisham?"

"Well, making the bed isn't something I've ever given much thought," he admitted. "I mean, it's only going to get messy again, isn't it?"

"Leslie, you know I'm not just your workout instructor and weight trainer. I'm supposed to be your lifestyle coach. There are just some things that you are going to have to change. Girls like things neat."

"Does it really matter if I'm not even here?"

"If a girl's bedroom was untidy, it would bother her all day, whether she was in it or not."

"Oh, come now," said Leslie with disbelief. "I know, not all girls are like that. Some girls are terrible slob, you know that's true!"

"Sure," admitted April. "There are lazy girls who don't mind a messy bed, or a stack of dirty dishes, or a thick layer of dust on every surface. Except, you aren't one of those! Leslie, when you're at Havisham you will find that girls talk about each other, and sometimes about the most trivial things. Believe me, you do not want to draw attention to yourself as the messy girl!"

"Okay, fine," agreed Leslie with reluctance. "So, how do I do this?"

"I'll help you this time," said April, grabbing the bed sheet and shaking it out. "Honestly, I can't believe you not only don't make your bed, but don't even know how!"

The pair worked on the bed, straightening the sheets and blankets, folding and tucking in the corners, fluffing the pillows. Then they quickly picked up the few items of clothing strewn about, hanging them in the closet or tossing them in the laundry basket as appropriate. The entire process took only a minute.

When they were finished April looked around the room and admired their work. "Nice!" she said with a satisfied grin. When Leslie said nothing, but simply stood there with an indifferent expression she chastised him, "Leslie, you have to look at the good job we did, and say 'nice'!"

"Why?" he had to ask.

April became exasperated. "Leslie! You need to modify your behavior. You need to take pride in being neat. Now look at what we've accomplished, and say 'nice'!"

Leslie still didn't quite get it, but he looked around the room. "Nice," he said with what conviction he could raise.

"Every morning from now on, as soon as you get up, you make the bed!" April told him. "Then you tidy the room, look at it, and say 'Nice'! Do you understand?!"

"Yes, yes, I understand!" said Leslie, realizing how serious April had become. Then hoping to pacify her he looked at the bed again and said, "Nice."

April calmed herself. She looked at the bed as well. "Yes, nice."

April thought for a while, and then spoke.

"Leslie," she said. "I think it would be good if you took up a hobby. A feminine hobby, which would help to ease you into your transition."

"Like what?" asked Leslie suspiciously.

"Nothing much. I was thinking, maybe you could take up painting your nails. Every night you could just remove the polish from the night before, then polish them again, maybe another color. Then look at the job you've done and say 'Nice'. I really think this would help you. Do you think you could do that?"

Leslie rolled his eyes. "I guess so."

"Come on, it'll be fun. I'll help you tonight, okay?"

Day 5

Leslie and April were sitting together in the conservatory. Leslie's daily workout usually took place around mid-morning and so was generally finished by noon. April hadn't been pushing him too hard, and so their afternoons had been free to wander the grounds. Unfortunately, though, today it was raining and so the pair had been trapped inside.

"Hey, Leslie," said April. "Did you remember to make your bed today?"

"Yes, yes I did," Leslie answered.

"So, how did it look?" asked April.

"Nice," replied Leslie with a satisfied nod.

"There's something else I've wanted to mention," April said. "Leslie, I notice that, since you arrived here, you haven't shaved."

"What?" replied Leslie. "What are you talking about? I shave every morning!"

"Oh, yes, of course," said April. "Of course, you shave your face. But girls, well, I mean, I wasn't thinking about shaving your face. As a girl, you should be shaving your legs."

"Oh," said Leslie. Then when he fully comprehended he added, "Oh! No, not that. I can't do that. I mean, not yet. You said, we would go at my pace, right? And if I'm not ready, then we should wait, right?"

The doorbell rang, far away at the front of the house. Neither stood to answer, however. They knew that the housekeeper would handle that.

"Leslie, you have to do this. You know that! There's no point in putting it off."

"Really, I can't. I'm not ready. I'm very uncomfortable with such permanent changes!"

April laughed. "Shaving your legs is not permanent! Believe me, you'll be doing it every week, maybe more. It grows back in no time."

"Well, maybe..."

The housekeeper interrupted their conversation. "Excuse me, ma'am, but a Miss Sarah Dempsey is at the door. She says she has an appointment."

"Thank you, Madeleine," said April. "Please tell her to set up in the grand bathroom."

The housekeeper bowed out of the room.

April turned back to Leslie. "Sarah is a beautician. I've asked her here to talk to you about shaving your legs, and help you with the first time. So, are we going to do this?"

Leslie centered himself. "It grows back, right?"

"Yes, it's only hair. It really does grow back."

"Okay then," he said reluctantly.

The two stood, and made their way to the grand bathroom. This was an enormous bathroom, more like a spa than anything else you might picture. By the time they arrived, Miss Dempsey had set up a table, and set out all her equipment.

"Hi, you must be Leslie! I'm Sarah. April told me what you're doing, how you want to look like a girl! I think it's so exciting! This is going to be fun. Okay, so strip down to your shorts, and hop up on the table."

Leslie began removing his shoes and socks, then his pants. "Just my pants, right?" he asked.

"No, everything! Nothing but shorts, keep going!"

When he was down to his underwear, Leslie got up on the table and sat with his legs over the side. Sarah plugged in her trimmer and tested it.