

How To 'Trap' A Mimic



Nick Lorance



A "Her Tv" Novel



Mags, Inc/Reluctant Press TG Publishers

This story is a work of fiction; any similarity to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental. All situations and events herein presented are fictional, and intended only for the enjoyment of the reader. Neither the author nor the publisher advocate engaging in or attempting to imitate any of the activities or behaviors portrayed.

For more, visit reluctantpress.com or magsinc.com.

Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet

We need *your* help! We spend several hundred dollars to edit, illustrate and typeset *each story*. It is important, therefore, that everyone works to help keep professional fiction alive on the Net.

The civil penalties for copyright infringement can be severe, including substantial monetary damages, injunctive relief, and liability for attorneys' fees incurred in prosecuting a case. In addition, criminal penalties may be imposed if someone willfully infringes a copyrighted work for commercial advantage or private financial gain.

Mostly, though, we just want to be able to keep offering this service to our authors and our readers.

Report stolen books by using the contact form at reluctantpress.com or call us at 800-359-2116

Thank you.

How to 'Trap' a Mimic

By Nick Lorange

"Taylor!" I turned, waving at Dana O'Toole. She was one of my best friends; had been since the first grade. Her long blond hair bounced, as did her breasts as she ran toward me. I just enjoyed the view.

She slapped my arm when she finally caught up.
"Perv."

"Me a perv? With you bouncing acres of creamy goodness when you run, I'm a perv? What kind of red-blooded man isn't going to enjoy watching that?"

"Chris for one."

"All right, what red blooded *straight* man?"

"Yeah, but we've been friends forever and you don't treat me like a girl."

"Because we have been friends forever." I told her. "As much as I like your bouncy-bouncy, I don't want to screw that up by treating you like a girl."

"Then stop looking at me like that."

"Hey, you bouncy, I lookie."

She just shook her head. Graduation was only a week away, and we were both kinda sad about that. We had been lucky as hell through school. Except for gym class, we'd been in the same classes together every school year. She had taken choir because I did, and I took home economics because she did. Try three years of being the only guy in an all-female class to make people wonder about your sexuality. Of course we had both gotten into the Martial Arts clubs, so most kept their thoughts about my sexuality to themselves.

"Hey guys!" We looked back, and Chris De Marco caught up with us. He had sandy brown hair, and an irrepressible smile. "Did it come yet, Taylor?"

"I don't even think it's breathing heavy yet."

He slapped my arm. "You are so bad."

"You hit like a girl." I told him, and he gave me a little moue like he was pouting. "That look doesn't work on me, you homo."

"Well it does on Mister Allbright."

"You're not saying he's..."

"Oh no!" He giggled. "He's just so easily flustered. You know what he asked me?" He looked at both of us. "If I have to go fight for my country, how can I serve if I'm gay!"

"He does know 'don't ask don't tell' was rescinded?" I asked.

"He just thinks we gay people can't fight."

"He's never been in a gay bar then, has he?" Dana said.

"Neither have I," Chris said virtuously.

"Because you're underage, you twerp," I shot back.

"No, because we've been too busy with the band," he retorted. "Mike would have taken me to one ages ago if I had but asked.

"You mean if you had knelt and kissed his ass--"

"But with one 't', you bitch." He mock glared at me. "You still haven't answered."

"Not yet." I sighed. We'd been jamming a few months earlier, and Chris had written a song. He was good enough for back-up vocals, but as a lead singer he didn't have the range. Can't really look down on him for that. I can't play guitar, keyboard or the drums worth a damn, but I've got the right kind of voice. But he was a poet at heart, and another name for poet is lyricist, meaning he could write one hell of a song. His song 'Love'll Get You If You Don't Watch Out' sounded good with just a keyboard and voice. When he finished playing, we decided to try it with our band, Cosplay.

We'd been friends a long time, Chris joining our little circle when we reached high school. The band had been his idea. Dana played a mean set of drums, Chris was great on rhythm guitars and keyboard, and Mike played a wicked bass. Mike Goldblum, his 'lover' ("Yeah, right," Mike would always reply laconically) was a college guy studying for a degree in Oriental Languages. We had spent a long time coming up with the band name, and since Cosplay was something we all enjoyed, we chose it;

subject to revision. Honestly, do you know how many band names the average modern band goes through?

Anyway, our Principal (The reason we had not only a Judo Club, but a Karate club, a Kendo Club and a Aikido club. Did you think I misspelled it when I made it plural?) had discovered that our sister city, Kifo, Japan was going to have a Culture festival, and had decreed we'd have one on the same day, which thanks to the International Date Line meant we'd be having it on Friday which for them was Saturday. And since it was a Japanese festival, our suggestion that we turn our class into the Cosplay Cafe was accepted easily.

When the class remembered that the band was named Cosplay, we were dragooned into performing. It was a blast. All of the stalls were selling Japanese snacks (You have to try the fried octopus balls!), and the auditorium was set up for all of the bands that were going to perform. We had gone all out, each of us in the band in a different costume from the Ranma series. So I went as Male Type Ranma, Dana as Girl Type with her hair tinted red, Chris as Ryoga, and Mike with a fake mustache as Soun Tendo.

Well, with that kind of outfitting, we had to do the theme song from the second season, and when they understood that we knew the Japanese lyrics, the crowd was screaming for more. The best music from the show after that was the theme for the last OVA season. We went through that, and they still wanted more. Chris did a riff from his own song, and I wiped sweat away before speaking. "Our last number is something brand new, written by Chris. So for the first time anywhere, 'Love'll Get You If You Don't Watch Out!'"

When you're singing for a crowd, there's a moment when you know you click. They're moving and grooving to your tune, they're dancing, clapping in time, and you're enjoying the performance as much as they are.

Then that hush when the song is done, followed by the roar of the applause.

Everyone said the same thing over and over that day, and it was repeated on Monday when a guy from the Visual Arts department handed me DVD's he'd recorded us on.

You guys should go pro...

It's the dream of every garage band; that your tunes, your vocals will catch the public interest and make you a star. We had three years of our blood, sweat, and tears in hand, and we felt the beckon of destiny. So we took all of our hopes, put them in an envelope with the DVD, and mailed it off.

Six weeks and no reply. I for one was sure we'd been hosed. Face it; hundreds of little garage bands send off their hopeful 'try me' DVDs every month, and in the last decade you can count the ones who get a record deal on the fingers of one hand with some to spare.

I think I was the only one who figured our music would fall into the abyss and never be seen again. But I kept a good front for the others. We sent it off with all of our dreams tied to it.

"Maybe today." I told him.

"Next year in Jerusalem." We turned. It was Mike.

I mock glared at him. "Thanks, Jew-boy."

"I'm not a little Jew-boy." He replied.

"Are you *sure* you're not a little Jew-boy?" I asked mimicking a joke he had told us. He looked at me, and his eyelid dropped slowly.

"I'm a *big* Jew-boy." And he was. He played Defensive tackle on our football team and looked like a six-foot four-inch tall brick wall/statue with a bad attitude.

We laughed together, heading for my home. Everyone else lived with their parents; not surprising since we were all under age except for Mike, but my house was the team clubhouse, and my garage was where the band was set up. I lived in a townhouse with my mother. We'd been without a dad since I was five, and good riddance. My dad gave fatherhood a bad name.

Mom told me once that her relationship with my father reminded her of an old TV show named *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*; especially in how they finally broke up. The climactic episode of the show was when after spending the entire season not even touching her, the lead couple finally made love, only to have the man in the show informed by his squeeze on the side that she had an STD. Of course she hadn't told him earlier because he never touched his wife anyway...

So for my fifth birthday, we received two letters. One from the local health department where someone who has caught an STD is required to report any other possible partners of the couple, and of course the girl on the side had reported Mom's name. The other was from a lawyer slapping Dad with a paternity suit from a third woman.

Great birthday, Dad. Thanks a lot.

The marriage staggered on for four more years until Mom was crying about yet another girl on the side and I just told her to dump his ass. She'd only tried for so long because she didn't want to hurt me. When I said that, she filed for divorce. Like a bull fighter, she got both ears and the tail; alimony, the car and the house. She'd straightened her shoulders, went out, and found work. By the time dad remarried and asked her to let his alimony go, we were doing all right.

He'd tried to get me in his custody, but the judge was a woman, and never even considered him there. He had

visitation rights, but he stopped doing that about two years ago.

We came into the house, and heard Mom on the phone. I knew immediately who she was talking to when I heard the tone in her voice. "It's not my problem, John." She said. She noticed us and covered the mouthpiece. "It's your sperm donor again. Snacks in the fridge." Then she uncovered the mouthpiece again. "So she got fed up with you two-timing her? What? *Another* paternity suit? Why am I not surprised."

We got the tray she had set up; veggies, ranch dressing and glasses of milk, and sat and listened. Having him call was better than watching a live car chase on TV.

"No, you can not move back in for a while... I don't care if you're living in a cardboard box and pushing your worldly goods around in a shopping cart... Fine, ask him if you want." She held up the phone. "Your Dad hopes he can change my mind by talking to you."

"I took the phone. "Hello, sperm donor."

"Come on sport, talk to her for me," he begged.

I held the phone without covering the mouthpiece. "Hey mom, you want to let the sleaze move back in?"

"No way in hell."

"She said no way in hell, and I believe her. Listen, I really hate to break up this pleasant family reunion, but I have to take a dump. Write if you get work, bye." I handed the phone back, and she hung it up. For a couple of seconds, the air was filled with tension.

"You know, if he had actually been just a sperm donor, I think you could sue the sperm bank," Dana suggested. Mom looked at her, then began to giggle. We all laughed at that.

"Mom, did we get anything from the record company?"

She opened her purse, one of those that could double as an overnight case. "I didn't bother to check the mail, just picked it up. Let's see, bank statement, bill, bill, some record company, bill--"

"Mom!" She gave me a sidelong look, then pulled the cream-colored envelope out, passing it over. I looked at it for a long time.

Dana poked me. "Come on, you dork, open it."

"I can't." I handed it to her. "You open it."

"What, so if we're rejected it's my fault? No way, Joe-Say."

"Oh for pity sake." Mom snatched the envelope, nodding thanks to Mike when he popped out his knife. She sliced it open, pulling out the pages inside. She opened them, and read silently.

"Well? Read it, Mom!"

"I *am* reading it."

I growled. "Out loud, so we can hear it."

"Oh, no one told me that part." She looked up with such a bland expression that I wanted to throttle her.

"Dear sir,

"Our acquisitions department received your disc, and they have brought it to my attention. The song you have on it is very well done, so well done in fact that we wish to speak not only to the songwriter, but the lead singer as well. We will have a representative in your city on Friday, and he would like to arrange a meeting with you both to discuss the possibility of signing your band.

"Sincerely, Joseph Westerly, Central States Marking Vice President." She looked up into our stunned faces. "You know, I think he might have liked your stuff."

Then we were shouting in joy. We'd caught the brass ring! We'd done it!

"Well, I for one think this is something to celebrate," Mom said when the furor finally died down. "What say a steak dinner out?"

"Right on!" Chris leaned over, and kissed me on the cheek.

Mom looked at him with a mock glare. "Christopher, if I have told you once, I have told you a thousand times; none of that in my kitchen. Take it upstairs to the bedroom."

"And not with me." I laughed.

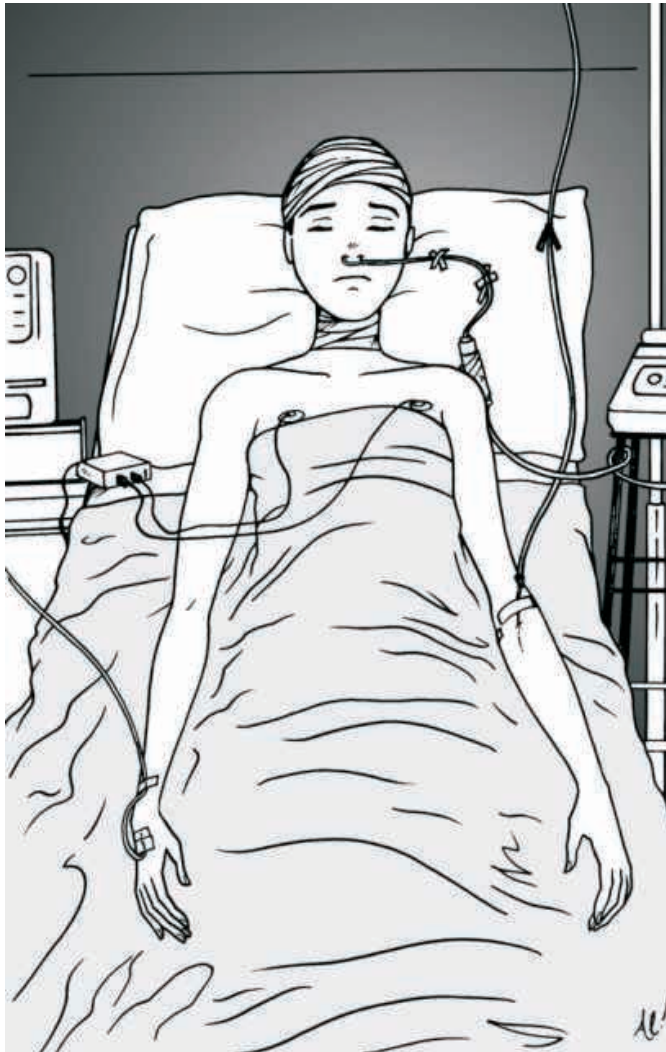
We got ready, and Mom really dressed up for it. In fact she looked like someone from an orphanage dragging some of her problem kids along when we got out to the car. We had a favorite family-style restaurant we always went to, and Mom parked in the lot. It was a busy night, so we had to walk a short way but nothing could ruin this afternoon

The neighborhood had started to decline a few years ago, so we had formed a square to keep Mom in the center and safe. We were coming up to the door when a group of Latinos with red bandanas around their heads came out.

What happened next was a blur that returns in my nightmares even today. First squealing tires, then someone shouting, and the Latinos started drawing weapons. Then, as I turned around, I heard a rapid popping sound. At the same instant, Mom staggered against me, some-

thing sprayed across my face, and something hit me in the throat like a hammer.

I tried to hold Mom up, but I was coughing on blood, and I collapsed to my knees under her dead weight. Mike tackled us both as Chris and Dana dove for the pavement. I remember all of that now, but when it happened it was a blur, and I was holding Mom to my chest. She was limp, and part of me wanted to shake her like she had just



fallen asleep. Mike was staring at me with a horrified expression. That was the last I remembered for a long time.

I came awake, and looked around blearily. It was a hospital room. I had tubes in my nose and an IV stuck in my arm. Beside the bed, Dana had fallen asleep, holding my hand. I tried to call her, and coughed as my throat spasmed. She snapped upright, putting her hand over my mouth. "Don't try to talk, Taylor. You were shot in the throat."

Shot? I remembered the popping sound, the impact. I looked around, and she handed me a pad and pencil without being asked.

HOW BAD?

"The doctors will be here in a while. It's only been about eighteen hours since it happened."

I remembered Mom falling against me. MOM?

She looked away, then back, crying. "Oh, Taylor. She was hit in the head. She's dead, Taylor, oh God, she's dead."

Shattered Dreams

Mom was dead, and I felt dead at the news. She had been my best bud ever since we kicked Dad to the curb. There was never anything more important if I needed attention. We would listen to her collection of old classic rock, and she discovered that I could sing any song I had heard more than three or four times almost exactly as the artist performed it. She'd joked that I could become the next Rich Little, calling me her little mimic.

I'd been in choir every year of school I had done, and in junior high I was one of only three first sopranos. Think of that sweet high-pitched voice that literally weaves the words of the leading female in opera into a story. Then at fourteen, my voice changed and suddenly I was one of

four baritones my last year of junior high; think of the villains in the opera instead.

Most people go through a lot of hell when their voices change, but mine just moved from one to the other like it was preordained. One week able to sing Brunhilde's part in *Die Valkure*, the next, able to Sing Odin's.

Now she was dead, and we'd never sing duets from those old records again. I picked up the pad. **WHAT ABOUT HER BODY?**

"The police asked your Dad to identify her-" She gasped as I almost crushed her hand. I scribbled furiously.

GET THE OTHERS, GET TO THE HOUSE!

"Taylor-"

NO TIME! IF HE'S ID'ED THE BODY, HE PROBABLY GRABBED HER EFFECTS. HOUSE KEYS, CAR KEYS, WALLET. EVERYTHING!

She started to protest, then merely grabbed her phone. She gave terse instructions, then was gone running.

I heard about it later. The first thing, the one that whetted my appetite for the full story was an hour after she had run out. A police sergeant came in, asking if I knew a John Stanhope. Of course I did, he was after all the sperm donor, oh, sorry, my father. He then asked if I had sent my friends to the house. I said I had. He then said there had been an altercation and two of my friends, the guys, were in custody awaiting transport to the station for assault, assault and battery, and assault with intent because they had fought with dear old Dad.

He then asked me if I had verbally given my father permission to enter the house. I waved at my throat, and told him via notes that I couldn't have told him that, and since Mom had divorced him, Dad had no right to be in

the house. He used his radio to call dispatch, told me my friends were being released, and that they'd get the moving van away from the house. But he left without telling me what moving van.

Then the doctors showed up. One was a dapper little man in a lab coat with a chart, the other a smaller Asian man, also in a lab coat. They introduced themselves as Cartwright, and Lim. They didn't bother to ask me how I was feeling.

"You were a tough case, son." Cartwright said. "If doctor Lim hadn't been visiting, we'd probably have more problems to deal with than we do. The bullet that killed your mother exited her skull before impacting your throat, and thanks to that, it had lost most of its energy--"

I waved my hands, writing frantically. THANKS TO MY MOTHER'S DEATH?

"I am sorry, son. I didn't mean to sound callous, but if the killer had used something like a 9mm or a .45, it would have killed you both. But he used a .38 in a snub-nosed revolver, which meant when it passed through your mother, it mushroomed, and when it hit you, it merely ripped across the front of your throat and imbedded itself here." He poked his own throat to the left of his Adam's apple. "In doing so, it shattered your larynx and imbedded cartilage in your voice box on the same side.

"Doctor Lim has a great deal of experience with Chondrolaryngoplasty; working on the larynx and Adam's apple itself, so he was able to remove the shattered cartilage after I got the bullet out. Of course his experience is more with sexual reassignment surgery, but the procedure is the same, and thanks to his skill, you shouldn't even have a scar. However the left vocal cord was nicked by the cartilage, and until you're healed, he

can't work on that. Unfortunately, your guardian refused to even think about that procedure."

GUARDIAN?

"Yes. With your mother dead, your father is claiming guardianship because he's your sole surviving relative..." He ran down because I was writing furiously.

HE MAY BE MY FATHER, BUT MOM DIVORCED HIM WHEN I WAS NINE. HE IS NOT MY GUARDIAN.

He sighed. "Be that as it may, he is your sole surviving relative and has already threatened litigation if we proceed without his permission. In fact, he told us he was going before a court to have himself declared your guardian later today."

Dana came in then, and I asked her to go to the house and get Mom's Rolodex from her desk. She left again.

ALL RIGHT, UNTIL THIS GUARDIANSHIP BULLSHIT IS TAKEN CARE OF, TELL ME STRAIGHT. HOW BAD IS IT?

"Well, without the procedure we were about to discuss, you'll heal, but your voice is damaged. We don't know how bad yet."

TALK TO ME

Lim took over. "What I was going to suggest is that we perform surgery using a technique that has proven to work in my native Thailand. First, using a laser, we trim the damaged cord, then trim the undamaged as well the exact same amount; in this case about eight microns total, eight millionth's of a millimeter."

SO I CAN SING AGAIN. They looked at each other. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Lim sighed. "The Chondrolaryngoplasty itself has already altered your vocal range. This would alter it even

more. You remember when your voice changed? Going through puberty, the chemical mix of your blood caused the vocal cords to drop and thicken, causing a deeper voice. We don't know how much your vocal range will change when we do this. You may sing again eventually, but nowhere close to your old voice."

HOW DIFFERENT?

"You will have a voice that is higher. How high we don't know yet. Without it, however, you would be able to talk, even sing, but not with your old singing voice, and trying to sing might cause additional damage and eventual loss of voice."

Numbly, I told them I'd get back to them after I dealt with the 'Guardianship bullshit'. But I wasn't thinking about that.

I'd never be able to sing again...

The beginning of the farce

My lunch was warm soup, custard, Jell-o, and warmed-up milk. The nurse told me that they wanted everything as close to lukewarm as possible so it wouldn't chill or burn me when I ate. Dana arrived with the Rolodex, and told me that Chris and Mike had stayed at the house. They had just been leaving when she arrived, and they caught Dad as he got in again. It seems that when he'd gotten Mom's keys, he'd had duplicates made. They relieved him of those, but just in case, they were staying put.

I flipped through to mom's "Lawyer's" section, and found a name. Dana called him, told him what had happened, and what dad was going to try to do. He didn't handle that kind of case, but he was able to transfer us to a partner who did. That woman told me she'd find out who was listening to the case, and have the procedure

halted. But she also warned me that the only way to stop him cold was for me to have myself declared emancipated. Through notes, I told her to do it, and bring any papers that had to be signed, giving her the room number in the hospital.

It was only then that I found out about the 'altercation'. Dana had called Chris, and Chris had called Mike. They were both en-route from their homes, only about four blocks for Mike, less for Chris. Dana had been lucky catching the bus, and arrived about five minutes after dad did.

Dad had hired a moving van, and the movers were already inside as Dad tried to out-yell Chris and Mike. Dana arrived, bypassed him, and stood in the way, refusing to let the movers go in or out. Dad started yelling at her instead, and a neighbor called the police.

Then Dad had done the most stupid thing he could do. He shoved Dana out of the way, and as they commented in Star Wars: Attack of the Clones, the 'adverse negotiations' began.

Mike grabbed his arm, and took a punch in the stomach. Chris punched him in the face, and Dad did the same in return. That was when Dana kicked him in the crotch, and Mike began beating on him like a red-headed step-child until the movers pulled him off.

That was when the police arrived. Dad accused them all of attacking him without provocation, and demanded that at least the guys be charged. Dana told another officer that with his ex-wife dead, he had come over to steal everything not nailed down. There was another screaming match between Dana and Dad until she employed that soccer-trained kick yet again and had to be restrained. Finally the officer called it in, and the sergeant was dispatched to talk to me. The guys sat in handcuffs,

and the cops had threatened to cuff Dana as well when she began blocking the entry again. Finally they told the movers to stop, and they waited until the sergeant reported.

They'd cut Chris and Mike loose; after all, you have the right to protect your property, and my sending them to stop Dad was legally the same. They then stood there and watched the movers put everything back that they had removed before telling Dad to go away, and telling the guys that they needed to get the locks changed 'just in case'.

I told her what the doctors had said, which brought the mood in the room back down big time. We had all dreamed the dream together, and now none of us had one left.

About three in the afternoon, Monica Collins, the lawyer suggested to me, arrived. She asked Dana to leave. "After all, I spent four years in law school; you have to read to be able to pass that!" Then she pulled the chair up so I could look at her comfortably.

"Well, I thought it was just hyperbole when I said it, but it looks like emancipation is what you're going to need to do." I asked her why.

"Your father's lawyer..." She read the note, and she smiled. "All right, the sperm donor's lawyer is arguing that today was caused by the medication you are under; that it was a knee jerk reaction caused by your mother filling your head with lies, and you not being able to comprehend reality. That this is a permanent disability, and that you will need care into the foreseeable future. That even if he is estranged, he is still your father, and has the right to ask for custody until you're eighteenth birthday, which won't be for another..." she looked at her notes. "Four months and seventeen days.