Oh, no... That can't be me. They dressed me up in the same clothes as some model and put her on the other side of the glass. She's pretending to move her head the same way as...

Oh, God. How did they do this? I thought I was a regular guy. Not macho or anything. Normal.

Dammit, Dane, get a grip. Everything's fake. Fake boobs, fake eyelashes. The hair's just extensions. I'm still a man.

Or am I? I look like a woman. And whatever they did to my throat... I sound like one too.

What does it take, for a guy to stop being a man and start being a woman?

A shaved body, breasts, makeup, lingerie, strapless dress... This hairdo is just the icing on the cake.

God, look at me! I'm not a guy anymore. I'm totally female.

What am I gonna do? By the time Christmas rolls around, no one's ever gonna believe this was just a costume.
“C’mon, Dane, you can so pull off being a dame. You’re the smallest guy in class.”

Can’t argue with that. I’m the shortest guy in whatever group I’m in. Miss Claire’s Advanced Drama class was no exception. Too many guys, not enough girls; the oldest excuse in the book. Maybe opting out of gym class wasn’t such a nifty idea after all. Too late now.

I looked at their expectant faces. Four guys, three girls—and me. And, needless to say, the script for the Christmas play required four couples.

“Seriously? Like I have a choice?” Being the youngest of three kids, I had a lifetime of hard knocks at knuckling under. But it still sucked.

Tiffany patted my hand. “It’s okay,” she said. “We’ll all help you.” By which she meant all three girls; herself, Janine and Miriam.

Great. Three of the choicest babes in school and they only wanted to turn me into one of them.

At first it was just deportment. I was taught how to carry myself like a total fem and speak like I was born to the gender. During rehearsals I wore a prop skirt and low heels, to remind my fellow actors that I was intended to be Daisy Florres, a recent divorcée and on the rebound to boot.

On the plus side I got to hang out with three gorgeous girls, which was a lot like winning the lottery. But they weren’t exactly looking at me as boyfriend material either, which sucked bigtime.

In the play I was paired up with Aaron, who was new to the school. He wasn’t in any academic-track courses, but he didn’t seem to be a jock either. He was one of those guys who finds a way to fit in with any group—an ability right up there in my books with having a superpower. And according to the girls he had the kind of booty that makes the ladies tingle in all the right places. Some guys have all the luck.

After a few weeks of rehearsals Tiffany cornered me in the hall. “You’re falling behind,” she told me. “The rest of us are so nailing our characters. But no one believes you as Daisy, and that goes double for Aaron. You’re holding him back.”

That was tough to hear. Acting was something I was good at, or so I thought. “Maybe I can’t do this,” I blurted out. “I’m not really a girl.”

“No worries. Mamma can fix.” Her smile rivaled the Grinch. “Just leave it to me.”

Did I dare? Did I have a choice?

* 

It’s the stuff of dreams are made of, hanging out with a girl in her bedroom. Lingerie, semi-nudity, the whole enchilada. Only one problem—all that nudity and lingerie? It was all on me.

Bummer.

Saturday, noonish. Tiffany’s bedroom was about as feminine as I expected, differing only in the details. The bedspread was yellow, not pink. The curtains didn’t have lace trim, and there were no little hearts on the walls. On the other hand, the vanity mirror was nice and big. No surprise there.

They sent me into the shower with a Ladyshave and a bottle of Nair. Their instructions: spare nothing below the neckline. If it’s sticking out of your skin—shave it, gel it, wash it. Then do it again. And while you’re at it, lose the facial hair. They wanted a blank canvas.
“You’re one of the girls,” Tiffany said. “It’s time you looked the part.” She was tall and blonde; taller than me, with wavy tresses that stretched halfway down her back. When a girl like that says she’s going to turn you into someone like her, at first you figure she’s crazy, then you say to yourself, “There’s no way,” and then you think: God, what if she actually does it? What then? I wasn’t sure I wanted to find out.

A firm-control body briefer is serious business. It had a spandex tummy panel, and what felt like a thin band of flex-steel encircling my waist. The crotch was wide enough to hide my junk, and the spaghetti straps were just the right length to not slip off my shoulders. They’d sized just for me.

That’s what I was wearing when I emerged from the bathroom. One step up from buck naked.

“Nice legs.” Miriam approached with a pair of flesh-colored balloons. “I hope you’re ready for a figure to match.” She placed breast forms in the cups of my briefer. “We’ll glue them in for the play, but this will do for now. Full dress rehearsals too. And if you ask us nice and polite, any old time you like.” She smiled.

I couldn’t smile back. What did she mean? They didn’t think I was the sort of guy who would do this on his own time—did they? As it turned out, they did. Bigtime.

More lingerie followed. Stay-up thigh-highs and a short slip with a see-through hem, all in black. Janine seemed to approve. “Decent figure,” she said. “Maybe this’ll work after all.” She was the redhead of the group, and the skeptic.

“You had doubts?” Miriam tugged on the hem to smooth out the fabric. She was the brunette. Her thick hair was a rich shade of chestnut.

“Ah, not really. But you never know, given what you have to work with.”

“You ladies about done?” Tiffany was bent over the vanity, sorting through a dazzling array of makeup. Miriam gave me a gentle push. “She’s all yours, Tiff. Do your thing.”

It took about an hour. Foundation cream, finishing powder, eye shadow, eye liner, mascara… after awhile I lost track. Finally, lip liner and crimson lipstick.

I wasn’t me anymore. I was a pretty girl with short hair. But that was about to change as well.

“Whaddya think, Dane?” Tiffany gave her hair a toss. “You wanna be a blonde, like me?”

“She’s better off red,” Janine said. She swept her own thick hair over her shoulder. “Life in the fast lane, Dane. You know, even with short hair she doesn’t look like a ‘Dane’ anymore. How about Danni? Or Danielle? Daphne?”

Tiffany shook her head. “Danica. That’s another name for Venus, the morning star. When we’re done she’s gonna be the star of the show.”

Miriam held up a dense mass of chestnut waves that closely resembled her own hair. “Miss Claire says Daisy is most like my character. Everyone knows brown’s the best, for a real lady.”

Whatever. I didn’t have a say in the matter.
Danica was a hit with the boys. As actors, they recognized and admired dedication to the craft when they saw it. “Dustin Hoffman, man,” Hugh said. “Takes a great actor to pull off being a girl. You look way better than Tootsie.”

Porter gave me a playful push. “I wouldn’t have known,” he said, eyeing the three girls arrayed behind me. “You look as real as they do.”

“Danica is real,” Tiffany said, lifting her head to gaze down upon the males. “She’s an actress and should be treated as such. For the play.”

Aaron grinned. “Only for the play?”

“Only? Only when she looks like this.”

“Consider it done,” Aaron said—to Tiffany, but he was staring straight at me when it said it.

I found myself blushing, and turned away. Janine just laughed. Miriam took my hand. “It’s okay to feel that way, okay? He’s a cutie.”

Truthfully, I hadn’t a clue what I felt. With the weight on my chest, the long hair sweeping my shoulders, the cocktail dress clinging to my hips, my feelings were as foreign as everything else.

“You’re getting into character,” she whispered in my ear. “It’s called method acting. Go with it.”

Method acting. Yeah. Living the role. Being the character, or at least someone quite like her. Like Dustin Hoffman. Be the girl. That’s when I knew that Dane wouldn’t be home for Christmas. But Danica would be. The play was Christmas eve.

My mother was surprisingly cool with abruptly being blessed with a daughter. “You look just like me when I was your age,” she said, wistfully.

The girls must have warned her what was coming. When I wandered into the kitchen—in full makeup, heels and a party dress that barely covered my thighs—she didn’t bat an eyelash.

I gave her the ‘method actor’ line, which I’d been practicing all the way home. Heck, I nearly believed it myself.

She smiled. “Honey, you’re my daughter. Even if it is only for a few weeks.”

With a month to go, the girls marched me off to a salon owned by Janine’s mother. My own hair was augmented with a set of extensions that closely resembled the wig, leaving me with a permanent ponytail when I wasn’t on stage. By this time it hardly mattered that I could no longer pass as a guy. I’d been Danica for so long that it almost felt normal, which was a scary thought.

A week later I was back in the salon, this time for a full makeover. The girls had already attached the breast forms with surgical glue, along with a vaginal prosthetic from the same manufacturer. I was full-on female, right through Christmas.

A stylist worked on my hair, refreshing the blowout from the previous session, while Janine and her mother went to town on my face. They were intent on turning me into someone else entirely; not just an actress playing a part, but a genuinely beautiful woman. Balls to the wall Danica.
They used a caustic depilatory, flawless coverage foundation creme and finishing powder to erase my old complexion and replace it with a set of skin tones no one could mistake for male. They contoured my face to narrow the nose, enhance the cheekbones, accent the jawline and widen my eyes, blending for that natural look.

“This is brilliant,” Miriam said. “Can you believe this is little old Dane?”

“It isn’t,” Tiffany replied. “This is Danica.”

I could hardly believe it myself, as the girl in the mirror grew steadily more impressive. *Womanly.* A cold chill raced down my back. It wasn’t just an act anymore. Danica was real. * 

Two weeks to go and we were on stage for a full dress rehearsal. The play was set in the Fifties, so I was wearing a vintage black party dress with a sweetheart neckline, lace applique, short sleeves and a full skirt that left my knees in view. I wore a pearl necklace and earrings, and my hair pinned half-up and half-down; its soft weight warming the back of my neck. Totally adorable.

“Babe, you look like a million bucks.” That was Daisy’s husband talking in the play, ably brought to life by Aaron. He delivered the line it like he meant it—which is what he was supposed to do, but it felt like he put a bit more oomph into it. He held me tighter too.

Not that I minded. Daisy was crazy in love with the guy. Method acting, right? Right.

Later on, the script called for a kiss. Aaron had been mailing it in for months, but this time he put his back into it. Our lips softened and moved in unison. It was a real kiss. I relaxed into him, unable to resist. Exactly what Daisy would do.

When we came up for air, everyone applauded.

Three days before opening night and I was back in the salon. While a stylist volumized my hair and blow-dried to get it moving, Tiffany towered over me, leaning on the chair’s armrests. “We got a problem, girlfriend.” She wasn’t smiling. “You look like one of us, and you move like one of us, but you don’t talk like us. Not half.”

I objected but she cut me off. “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it. When you speak normal, person to person, you voice goes all soft and it’s fine. No worries. But when you raise your voice, so the audience can hear, the pitch goes down. That’s gonna kill us in the opener.”

I shrugged. Too late now, though I didn’t say it.

“No problemo. We got it covered.” She grabbed my arm. Miriam stepped into view and took the other. Janine leaned over my shoulder and a large syringe appeared in my face. The stylist yanked my hair back, my mouth opened and the syringe plunged into my mouth, spraying liquid ice down the back of my throat. I gagged, but managed to keep my lunch. My breathing grew ragged.

The syringe withdrew and they let go. The stylist returned to brushing my hair. I glared at Tiffany.

“Don’t try to talk,” she said, “or you’ll end up speaking like Donald Duck. Like, permanently. Keep quiet for a day or so. You’ll be fine.”

I was. My voice turned into a smooth contralto, a voice no one could doubt as female. A voice that could only be described as *sultry.*

On opening night, fully dressed and tressed as Daisy Florres, I could only gaze at myself in the mirror, mesmerized with existential horror.

*No... Please stop. I’m still a man... Aren’t I?*
Oh, yes... That's me. I'm not just some dweeb they dressed up as an actress for some dumb play, and this ain't no act. I'm a woman.

I don't care how they did it. These boobs won't be fake much longer and neither will this hair. I'm not a man anymore.

Maybe this is all it takes, to turn a man into a woman. If you look like a girl and you sound like a girl, then you are a girl.

Whatever they did to my throat is permanent. So be it. I'm Danica.

Hello, Aaron. I know the play is over, the audience is gone, the stage is empty. It's just you and me....

I think I'm ready now. For the part that comes after that last kiss.

I know, it felt real to me too. Maybe it was. Maybe we weren't just acting. I know I wasn't.

Let's find out together.

Amanda Hawkins