How am I doin' so far? I went to a lot of trouble to look this feminine, you know. Divine Aphrodites don't come cheap, but they're worth it.

The hair? It's human. Hot fusion extensions with a keratin bond, so I'm set for the next few months.

Are you okay with this? We can be BFFs and we can tell everyone that your useless boyfriend just got a job in Alaska or, ya know, whatev.

I was thinking we could double-date. You can show me the ropes, the handcuffs, the ball-gags... all that good stuff. I know I've got a lot to learn, but I'm motivated.

I wanna be just like you, Cheryl. A man-grabbing sex kitten who can get a guy to do damn near anything she wants, just by toying with her hair. Uh... that is what you wanted?
Cheryl stared at Tanner, or the ‘divine Miss Taylor’ as his business card read. How could he do this to himself? And why? And seriously, ‘man-grabbing sex kitten’? Where did that come from?

“I’m Tanya,” he said, offering his hand. “Just got in from, like, nowheresville. I could sure use a BFF, if you’re game.”

“Tanya,” Cheryl repeated, shaking the very female hand offered, with fingers as slim as any girl’s. Her own grip was by far the stronger of the two.

He—she?—smiled. “What’s yours?”

Running on autopilot, Cheryl gave her own name, blinking to clear her head.

“Kewl.” Tanya ran those girlish fingers through ‘her’ hair. “Nice place you got here. Hope you don’t mind if I crash for awhile. No job yet but I’ve waitressed, so maybe I’ll check out the restaurants around the ‘hood. I’d so like to get into modelling, though. You know anybody, like, important?”

Cheryl stared at her apartment, as if it had just turned upside-down. “Crash? But I, er… live with my boyfriend.”

“Didn’t you just tell me he got a job in Alaska?” The woman sashayed over to the spare bedroom. “It’s not like I’ll be sleeping in his bed or anything. I’ll take this room, and there better be lots of closet space. My wardrobe is due for a major expansion, soon as there’s a sale.”

Cheryl sighed. “Sure. Whatever… Did you say you’ve ‘waitressed’ before?”

“Straight up. Girls like us, who hasn’t?” She cupped her breasts suggestively. Yikes. “Look, can we sit and talk? I need to ask you something.”

Tanya shrugged and perched herself on a divan, carefully smoothing her skirt under her. She artfully crossed her legs at the knee, leaned forward and cupped her chin in one hand. “Shoot.”

Cheryl sank onto the couch. “Why are you doing this?”

“Doing what? That modelling thang?” She tossed her hair. “Don’t you think I can? I’m a natural, aren’t I?”

“Can I talk to Tanner now?”

She wrinkled her nose. “That loser? Why would you want to?”
“Loser? Why do you say that?”
Tanya rolled her eyes. “Let me see. He can’t keep a job, he can’t make rent, he can’t handle a major babe like you in the sack—isn’t that enough? Then there’s the whole cross-dressing thing. I mean, what’s up with that noise?”

“Jesus—I told you I didn’t mind!”
She checked her fingernails, which were perfectly manicured and painted a ruby red to match her lips. “Uh-huh. I’m sure even he could see right through that.”

“And while we’re at it, what’s with this ‘man-hungry sex kitten’ business?”

“Man-grabbing. There’s a difference.”

“Really. What might that be?”

“Hungry is just wanting something. But if you go out and grab that thing, that’s a whole different thang.”

“Am I to understand that you think I was cheating on y—on Tanner?”

Tanya wound a long tress of hair about her finger. “Proof’s in the puddin’, babs. He saw you with that guy from work.”

“And how would you know that? ‘You’ being ‘the divine Miss Taylor’ and all.”

Another eye-roll. “People do talk you know. He dished on his way out.”

“Did he mention that I already told him Jerome and I are just friends?”

“I’m sure he’s heard that one before.”

“Lemme get this straight. Tanner figures I’m getting some on the side, so then he goes out and turns himself into a man-hungry—” She held up a hand. “Sorry, man-grabbing sex kitten. How the hell is that supposed to fix anything?”

“You’re missing the point. That dude is gone, right? He’s outta here. He ain’t comin’ back no-time soon. And in his place, you got yourself a hottie to hang with. You ask me, you’re waaay ahead.”

“But—I liked Tanner. I really did.”

Tanya blew a raspberry. “Anyone can ‘like’ someone. Did you have the hots for the guy? Did he make your toes curl the way a dude like Jerome can?” She waved Cheryl off. “Don’t bother. We all know the answer. Hey, maybe you could see if Jerry’s up for a threesome. I bet you and me working together could totally rockem-sockem his world.”

“No way. I’m not dragging him into this mess. It’s freaky enough already.”
“What mess? This dump is spotless.”

“Oh God…” Cheryl rubbed her eyes. If the past was anything to go by, she had the makings of one shitstorm of a headache. “Listen, who on earth did this to you? Can you tell me that?”

“Who ‘did’ me?” Tanya flashed a coy smile. “How long you got? Lemme see, there’s the Marine Corp, the US Navy, the Oakland Raiders—”

“Tanner!”

“You’re no fun.” Tanya flopped back and crossed her arms. “Dunno why you have to ask me about the guy. He’s your boyfriend, after all. But if you just have to know, there’s a salon down on 23rd Street, a block or two past the library. It does feminization on the side. I-E, male-to-female makeovers.”

“But why? Why would y—why would Tanner up sticks all of a sudden and get himself feminized? What changed? And don’t tell me it’s because he couldn’t make his half of the rent this month. There’s gotta be more to it than that.”

“Well… he did happen to mention, on his way out the door, that he’d been seeing a therapist—as in ‘psycho’.”

“Why would he do that?”

“You’re askin’ the wrong puck-bunny. I only work here. Crash here.”

“Okay, but… what does a shrink have to do with a salon that feminizes men?”

“They work together. The clinic has this new therapy that helps guys deal with gender dysphoria. Know what that is?” Tanya gazed serenely at her fingernails, looking pleased. “That… is when a guy doesn’t know whether he’s a man or a woman. And your loser boyfriend was a cross-dresser. You do the math.”

“I don’t think dysphoria is quite the same thing as being a cross-dresser.”

Tanya shrugged. “That’s what they said. You don’t argue with the doc.”

“What was this new therapy?”

“Aversion therapy. That’s where you rub the puppy’s nose in it, see? Like, really hard. Repeat as necessary. After that, the puppy won’t do it anymore. Ipso facto, the puppy’s cured.”

“Oh God.” Cheryl rested her head on one hand. “This—this—is supposed to cure your cross-dressing habit?”

“Not mine, his. Me Tanya, you Cheryl.”
“Right, right…” Heavy sigh. “Correct me if I’m wrong, but isn’t aversion therapy supposed to involve pain—or some kind of negative reinforcement? Like, to make a guy stop smoking, the therapist gives him a shock every time he lights up.”

Another shrug. “I guess. So what?”

“So I don’t see much in the way of negative reinforcement going on here.”

“You’re looking at it,” Tanya said.

“Dressing up as a woman? Is that supposed to be a ‘bad thing’ for you?”

“Not just that. It’s living as a woman. Being a woman, 24/7. Having to shave your legs, fix your face every morning, walk around in heels all day, worry about your hair, coordinate your outfits, wear something different every day… I’m tellin’ you, it’s tough.”

“Yeah, for a regular guy that would be a total nightmare. But isn’t that exactly what a cross-dresser wants? Isn’t that what you guys dream about?”

“I wouldn’t know. Me Tanya.”

“For God’s sake.” Cheryl wanted to scream. “You’re saying this quack sent my boyfriend to a salon to be turned into a girl so he could live as a girl and get so sick of being a girl that he’d never want to dress up as a girl again—is that it?”

“You catch on fast.”

Cheryl fell silent. How could you argue with logic like that? But maybe arguing was the wrong approach. “I’m not a ‘sex kitten’,” she said at last. “I’m not like that. There’s no reason you have to be either. Don’t you think a woman should have more self-respect?”

Tanya looked away. Thick hair swept gently across her shoulders. “I guess. But… I wouldn’t know what it’s like.”

“That’s okay.” Cheryl sat down next to her and took the girl’s hand. “I’ll help you. This might not work very well as aversion, but if it helps you feel better about who you are as a person, or as a woman, then maybe it’s for the best.”

**Six Months Later**

Cheryl waved from the departure lounge as the ‘divine Miss Taylor’ boarded her flight to Bangkok and a date with SRS. According to her therapist, the aversion therapy was a complete success. Tanner was no longer a cross-dresser.