Trish inspected her boyfriend with a critical eye. The flowers, she mused, were a nice touch. He was more than ready for the altar, and whatever might lie beyond. She could hardly wait for the big moment, late that night, when she would leap from the closet and shout “April fool!” The fact that April first was months away didn’t bother her one bit. You have to strike when the moment is right, and now was the time for this particular prank.

“Babe, I can’t thank you enough for doing this for me,” she said, adjusting the huge bow that decorated Benny’s derriere. “Yeah, I’m starting to get a handle on how much you ladies have to go through to make this happen.” He tucked a stray tress behind his ear. “This hairdo alone took nearly four hours!”

“To be fair, most women don’t need to get extensions first.”

“I guess. But the makeup was no walk in the park either. They must’ve spent a couple hours on that. Man…” He turned his head and lifted his chin. “I can’t believe how, ya know—how much I look like a real woman. Kinda like my mom in her wedding pics. She’s blonde too. Hey, is that why you had ‘em dye my hair?”

It was, but Trish wasn’t about to admit it. “I know it took a long time to put this look together—and again, to be fair, being fitted for a sweet pair of boobs isn’t normally part of the process. But most of what you experienced is what women have to suffer through to make themselves beautiful for the big day. And it isn’t just for ourselves either,” she added. “The bride is the focus of attention for everybody. If I don’t look my best, the whole event won’t measure up.”

“I get that,” Benny said. “Really, I do.” He wriggled his hips. “Man, this corset is a killer. They said it took five inches off my waist and I believe it. Between that and these hip pads…” He performed a quick pelvic thrust, barely managing to recover his balance, then fussed with the folds of his skirt.

“Lingerie is what it is. Nothing particular to cross-dressing there. Hey, do you like the dress? I picked it out myself.”
“It’s gorgeous. Is it the one you’re planning to wear?” Benny had popped the question some six weeks before, but as yet they hadn’t gotten around to setting a date.

“God, no. I’ll be going modern for sure. But for you, I figured it would be better to try something more traditional.”

“Oh. I’m not sure why that’s better, but what the heck. Once in a lifetime experience, right? Might as well go all the way.”

“My thoughts exactly.” There was a quiet knock at the door. “Ah, that’ll be your father.” She hastened to answer it.

“My father?” Benny nearly dropped his bouquet. “What the hell—you said this was just gonna be the two of us!”

“Get real. It takes far more than two people to put on a wedding; all those nice ladies at the salon, for example. Moreover,” she said, opening the door, “a bride needs somebody to walk her down the aisle. Meet Reginald, your daddy for the day.”

An older man with a loose mop of graying hair tipped his hat and stepped into the room. “Ms. Wethers. A pleasure to see you again. Ah, there she is! My little girl—all ready for her big day.”

“Ready as she’ll ever be. She’s got wedding jitters, though. She doesn’t know if she’s coming or going, or even who she is.”

“I’ll keep her in line,” Reginald said, grinning fiercely.

Benny drew Trish aside. “Who is this guy? My dad is bald, with a paunch that makes it look like he’s carrying twins.”

Trish moaned. “God, couldn’t you at least try to stay in character? You know how important this is to me. Yes, I hired an actor to pretend to be the bride’s father—is that so wrong?”

He shook his head, eyes downcast. “It’s just… I didn’t know there was gonna be a wedding and—”

“It’s the super-deluxe wedding package—what did you expect?”

“I dunno… not that, I guess.” He scuffed his ice-white court shoes adorned with a pink satin bow over each toe. “Is there gonna be a minister and everything?”

“For god’s sake, Bethany—of course there is! A minister, a pipe organ playing ‘Here Comes the Bride’, a pile of guests—you can’t have a wedding without all that stuff. How are you gonna know what it’s like for me without all the bells and whistles? And please stop scratching those lovely shoes on the floor.”

“Sorry.” He straightened up and tightened his grip on the bouquet. “What do I have to—” His eyes widened. “Did you say Bethany?”

“That’s your name, babe. All you have to do is accompany Reggie here downstairs, stroll down the aisle, say ‘I do’ when it’s your turn—and dammit, pretend like you’re having the time of your life! That is what you expect me to do, isn’t it?”

Benny looked startled. “Oh yeah, ‘course.” He licked his lips and swallowed. “I’m, uh… I’m Bethany.”

Trish smiled. The vocals weren’t half bad. They’d been working on his feminine voice for more than a week. He’d managed to get the inflections down pat early on, but it was gratifying to hear that his vocal range had risen as well. The drugs she’d dosed him with may have had an effect, but more likely it was the result of seeing himself fully decked out as a woman—a placebo effect of sorts.

“She’s all yours,” Trish said, guiding the would-be bride to the father’s side. “I’m gonna see if they’re ready downstairs.”

Reginald put an arm around his ‘daughter’. “This is a proud day, my dear. What father wouldn’t want to see his sweet little girl get married to a fine young man?” He drew the bride closer. “Now listen up. Here’s what you’re gonna do: when we get the signal, you’re gonna march into that church like this is the best damn day of your femmy life. Capiche? And you better smile like you mean it too.” Benny just nodded, his eyes wide.

Trish peeked into the side door of the chapel. Five minutes to go and the place was packed. Most of the guests were actors but there were a few genuine friends sprinkled in here and there. They were there to support her, of course, as Benny’s friends could certainly not have been trusted to keep a secret like this. In the alcove to the right of the altar, the organist was warming up.
Elaine chose that moment to arrive. “Hey, how’s it going, girl? Is the pretty little Bunny ready for her big day?”

“Hi, Lainey. Can the ‘Bunny’, will ya? Her name is Bethany.”

“Oh, well. Scuse me and all that.” She poked her head through the doorway. “I see you got yourself a full house. Aren’t you worried she’ll bolt when she gets a load of what you’ve got planned?”

“Nope. Reggie has orders to nip bridal cold feet in the bud.”

“Reggie. Right.” The other woman shivered. “Man, that guy gives me the creeps.”

“Reggie delivered his ‘daughter’ to the altar and found a seat. For his part, Benny stared at the groom with apparent disbelief. Then his gaze roamed across the crowd of guests. Trish knew what he was looking for and slid lower in the pew.

“Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and in the presence of these witnesses, to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony…” The minister’s voice droned on and Trish soon lost interest. The formal ceremony was too old-fashioned for her taste and she began imagining what her own modernized version might look like.

The event concluded with the bride’s reluctant ‘I do’, a wave of applause, and a kiss Benny clearly wasn’t expecting. Trish almost laughed out loud as he finally submitted, with Bethany squirming like a trapped cat in her husband’s grip.

But when the minister attempted to lead the newlyweds into a side room for the signing, the bride bolted. She marched down the left-side aisle, aiming straight for the side door. Trish intercepted her.

“Where do you think you’re going, missy?”

“I’m done,” Benny hissed, still in female voice.

“No, you’re not. This is a super-deluxe package, remember? It ain’t over until the fat lady signs—at midnight, or thereabouts.” She gripped her boyfriend’s arm, its feminine delicacy apparent through the lacy fabric of his gown. She drew him aside. “You’re going to get your pretty little butt back there, you’re going to sign on the dotted line—given names, Bethany Elizabeth—and then I’ll help you get changed for the reception.”

“Well, he is your husband. What did you expect?”

“Christ, Trish—how can you be okay with all this?”

“Are you out of your mind? This has gone far enough. That dude just kissed me, for fuck’s sake!”

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“Christ, Trish—how can you be okay with all this?”

“Are you out of your mind? This has gone far enough. That dude just kissed me, for fuck’s sake!”

“Are you talking about?”
“It’s my nephew,” Trish said, forcing a note of fear into her voice. “You remember Donnie, don’t you? He just turned twelve a few weeks back. Well... he’s been kidnapped.”

Benny’s eyes widened. Excellent, Trish thought, he took the bait.

“We spoke to the police, of course, but they couldn’t find him. He simply vanished from his back yard; no one saw what happened.” She took a deep breath. “Then we heard from the kidnappers.”

Benny nodded. “They want ransom money?”

Trish shook her head. “Not money, as such.”

“Jeez, what else is there? Gold? Diamonds? Bitcoin?”

“It’s some sort of crime family, the cops say they’re local. The boss of the gang, the father, he wants us to give him something—for his son.” She took Benny’s hand in hers. “It’s kinda weird. The son apparently has a thing for guys dressed as girls. Do you, uhm, see where I’m going with this?”

Benny bit his lip. “I’m getting worried, if that’s what you mean.”

“See, what they demanded was a fake wedding and a tranny bride for the night. They were very specific: it couldn’t be a shemale call-girl or even an actual cross-dresser. It had to be a regular guy, dressed up as a woman—convincingly.”

Benny groaned. “I’m getting worried, if that’s what you mean.”

“Jesus. I am so not believing this.”

“The gang arranged for your makeover at the salon. They even paid for the dress, after I picked it out.” Trish pressed the back of his hand to her cheek. “Please, Benny... Bethany. I’m begging you. If you don’t do what they want, they’ll kill Donnie.”

Benny’s eyes rolled. “But—this is ridiculous! Are you saying this guy wants to spend the night with me? Uh-uh, no way. That’s off the table. I’m not gay!”

“I know that. And you wouldn’t be, right? Not if you’re only doing it to save someone’s life.” She gave him a hug. “Please, please, you have to do this! If you won’t do it for me, do it for my sister. If anything happened to Donnie, she’d be devastated. It would tear our whole family apart. Is one night so much to ask?”

In the end he relented, as she knew he would. He had a good heart, did Benny. He certainly wasn’t the manly type. She’d always been able to talk him into doing pretty much whatever she wanted—although dressing up as a woman and spending the night with a man had to be a world record for boyfriend manipulation. Perhaps she should give the Guinness people a call.

Elaine came over as she watched the bride and groom disappear into the signing room. “Talked her into it, did ya?”

Trish nodded. “Wasn’t easy, either. I really had to turn the screws.”

“I bet. Even Benny has his limits. By now he’s probably way into the red zone. You think he’ll bend over for the guy?”

Trish sighed. “You know, I think he just might. He’s a Boy Scout at heart, our Benny, and he believes he’s saving a life.” She stared off into the distance, then blinked and shook herself. “Anyway, I won’t let it get quite that far. I’ll let them do the foreplay thing for awhile, then pop out of the closet right after Bethany peels off and hops into bed.”

Elaine gave her a sly look. “Oh, e’mon. Why not let the kids have their fun? This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Benny to see how the other half lives.”

“For one thing, there’s the small fact that the actor we hired to play the groom wasn’t instructed to actually do the bride. His orders are to play the part right up to the bed scene.”

“Yeah, but—ya see—he’d probably just go with the flow if we let him. He’s gay, you know.”

“I did not know. Whose idea was that?”

Elaine shrugged. “No biggie. Lots of actors are gay.”

“Lots aren’t. But—whatever. All the more reason, I suppose, to be there when the deal goes down.”

“Mind if I tag along? I’m dying to see his face—”

“When I drop the bomb and tell him the whole thing was just a big spoof? The prank of the century?” Trish nodded. “Sure, why not. It was your idea in the first place.” Elaine just smiled.
The closet in the bedroom of the honeymoon suite was empty and easily roomy enough for the two of them. They moved a couple of decorative table-chairs inside, took their seats and slid the door closed. By leaning forward, they found the slats just wide enough to see through.

Ten minutes later, the newlyweds arrived. The bride was wearing a short pearl-white swing dress with a low-cut bodice and crocheted sleeves. She looked extremely nervous. The groom, whose name was Raoul, popped the cork on a bottle of champagne. “To you, my dear,” he said, handing her a glass full to the brim.

Bethany knocked it back in one go and asked for more. Trish and Elaine stifled their giggles. “Gosh, you’d think she’d want to remember her wedding night,” Trish whispered. “Probably a good move,” Elaine said. “Dull the senses. You never know what could happen.”

Raoul savored the contents of his own glass, then set both empties aside. He took his ‘wife’ into his arms, whispered into her ear and slowly removed the pins from her hair. She gazed up at him with the same hopeless expression a rabbit might wear, faced with an approaching wolf. He arranged the girl’s long blonde hair across her shoulders, stroking it gently, then moved in for a kiss. Strong arms tightened their grip. In helpless response, her hands circled his chest, grasping in vain at his muscular shoulder blades.

“Pretty steamy,” Trish whispered. “I’m almost jealous.”

“Down, girl. Let’s try to remember why we’re here.”

“Oh, girl. Let’s try to remember why we’re here.”

“I’m afraid you’ll have to. Wait, that is.”

Trish felt a sting in her neck. Moments later, her body went numb. Her lips moved. “Wha—?”

Elaine’s fingers interrupted. “Shhh. You can’t talk anyway. For a few hours you won’t be able to move either. I really am sorry, luv, but this is the way it has to be.”

Out in the bedroom, Raoul removed his bride’s dress. Clad only in an ivory slip, she took a deep breath and dropped her panties, then sat to remove her pumps and stockings. Raoul shrugged out of his jacket and doffed his pants. A moment later the lights went off.

“I know what you’re thinking,” Elaine whispered in the darkness. “Like, why? Well, it’s kinda funny. I really do hope we’ll be able to laugh about this someday.” She patted her friend’s hand. “You know that story about your nephew being kidnapped? It’s actually true. Only it’s my nephew instead of yours. And they didn’t actually threaten to kill the kid, just tickle him real hard and send him to bed without supper. But, you know, tears are tears. I had to do something, and with you so into pranking your boyfriend I just figured—heh, why not kill two birds?”

In the silence that followed, they could hear wet smacking sounds coming from the bed. The newlyweds were right into it. Now and then a masculine voice spoke, too low to make out the words, and then the smacking would resume. After awhile they heard a high-pitched moan from the bride, interspersed with grunting.

“He’s inside her,” Elaine muttered. “What is it the cross-dressers say when this happens? Your boyfriend just became a woman.”

A long groan erupted from the bed, followed by louder grunts and high-pitched gasps. “All the way in,” Elaine elaborated. “Won’t be long now. You should be proud. Benny’s a real trooper—not one word out of character. Ya think maybe he likes it?”

Raoul emitted a loud groan that trailed away amidst more high-pitched moans. Trish cried softly, unable to make a sound.

Elaine managed to escape the closet when the lovers decamped to the bathroom to clean up. Still paralyzed, Trish had no choice but to stay for rounds Two and Three, as Bethany became increasingly responsive and even eager to reciprocate her husband’s passion. In round Four, she became the aggressor.

Ultimately, Trish would not be saved by the bell, or anything else short of sunrise. This race was destined to go the distance.