Taking It to the Next Level

“Arend you sure you want to do this?” Sam was seated by the window, her short hair lit up by the late afternoon sun like a dandelion gone to seed. She sounded sad.

Actually, I was touched. We’d been dating on and off since high school, and more seriously in the months since I’d left college with a degree in Waste Management. I know it isn’t the coolest field of study, but the Earth itself is telling us we have to circularize our resource streams, so someone has to do the legwork. In spite of the ‘ick’ factor Sam had stuck with me, and the same was true when I told her about my cross-dressing habit. To a lot of people that’s an ‘ick’ factor way beyond waste management, but full credit to her: she took it in stride. Since then I’ve dressed up for her several times, but we’ve never done more than order take-out and watch chick flicks on Netflix.

That was about to change. “More than sure,” I told her. “That’s the funny thing about cross-dressing. You always feel this pressure inside to take it to the next level, whatever that might be.” I finished tidying my hair and set the brush aside. I wasn’t yet acclimatized to the extensions that had been fused into my own longish hair two weeks prior, but it felt a little more natural every day. “Try on a dress and the next time you have to wear full lingerie. Put on lipstick and at some point you have to go for a full makeover: foundation to false eyelashes. Take a walk around the block one night and you’ll find yourself driving across town the next—or even walking into a gay bar. As far as I can see, there’s no end to it.”

“You make it sound like some kind of curse.”

“More like an addiction.” Facing away from her, I dropped my boxers and sat down on the bed to slip my feet into a pair of sheer black pantyhose. I’d been shaving for months and my legs actually looked pretty sweet. I added a pair of stiletto heels and fastened a strap around each ankle. I took a certain satisfaction in the way four-inch heels evened the playing field between Sam and I—provided of course that she restricted herself to flats. Fair is fair.

“Even so,” she said. “Dressing up is one thing. It’s fun.” She shifted in her seat. “I get why people want to look pretty—even guys. It’s the selfie culture. We all want to look good. The walls have eyes, right? These days, everything does.”

“There’s more to it than that.” I went to my closet and searched through my collection of ladies wear. It took up half the space available and seemed poised to claim more in the months ahead. And why the hell not, I thought, recalling my plan. These are the clothes I should and would be wearing more often.
I held up a striped mini-dress, reviewing what might go with it. Strapless bra? No problem. A year’s worth of estrogen pills, from an earlier phase of taking it to the next level, had given me just enough of a bust for that to work.

“You know, I used to hate myself for doing this. How many guys can pull off impersonating a girl like I can? Not many,” I said, stating the obvious. “But I got over that. So what if I’ve got a decent figure, nice hair and ‘delicate features’, like my mom used to say. Why should I feel guilty about it? What would be the point?”

Sam sighed. “No reason I can think.”

“Exactly. Nobody gets hurt.” I tossed the dress on the bed and rifled through my lingerie drawer for the right bra, then mechanically strapped myself into it.

“That’s not true,” she said. “You could get hurt, messing around with your brain.”

I smiled. “Way I see it, my brain’s already pretty messed up. You see all this stuff?” With a flourish, I indicated my feminized body: long hair, breasts, shaved legs, penis tucked far out of sight. “That’s what you get when a guy’s brain goes off the rails.”

“You’re not crazy, Joey! I don’t even think you’re tran—transsexual? Some guys just really like dressing up like girls, and there’s nothing wrong with that. I’m right, aren’t I?”

I ducked my head. “I don’t think about stuff like that.” I went to the table I’d set up as a vanity, pulled up a stool and set to work with a practiced hand. It didn’t take long for my usual skin prep, some subtle contouring and more than enough eye and lip product to make me look pretty.
I busied myself, putting the cosmetics away. On a whim I slipped into the blazer Sam had been wearing. “My boyfriend’s jacket,” I said playfully, sliding onto the bench next to her. She often wore clothes that wouldn’t have looked out of place on my male self. To me, that was unthinkable. She was born a girl, so why not embrace it? “I think it’s time.” The neural interface was in my hand.

“Joey… don’t do this. I’m serious. You don’t need to. You’re already girly.”

I barely glanced at her. “Call me Jaclyn.” I entered my authentication protocol and let the device scan my irises. It had to be within three feet for the wireless link to reach the circuitry in my head, and it wasn’t connected to the Web—but even so security had to be airtight. You wouldn’t want some random hacker downloading a virus into your brain. That sort of thing did happen from time to time, but the risk was low. What you really have to worry about is what some folks choose to do to themselves. People are weird.

The Girly-Girl app was ready to go. I glanced at Sam, but her gaze was elsewhere. I hit the Upload button, closed my eyes and clutched the device to my chest.

The way these things usually work, when you upload an app, is your mind goes all fuzzy for a second or two—sort of like the whole world zaps into reverse colors and back again in the time it takes you to suck air. That’s what happened, so no surprise there. I opened my eyes, but I didn’t really feel… any different.

I stared at the neural interface. The silly thing said ‘upload successful’. A giggle escaped my lips. Boys and their toys. I should’ve known better.


“Midnight, yes. But not tonight. This is set for tomorrow night.”

“Oops. Silly me.” I tucked nylon-clad legs under me. Slowly I wound a long curl of hair around my forefinger. Something did feel kind of different, but I couldn’t put my finger on it. I get like that sometimes.

Sam thrust the thingy at me. “You’re stuck like this for the next thirty-plus hours! Do you know what that could do to your mind?”

I wrinkled my nose. “Lots of apps last longer than that.”

“Sure—security apps. Vocabulary builders. Map apps to help you find your way around. Not one that alters your personality! You don’t fool around with stuff like this. Where’d you even get the damn thing anyway?”

“Gawd, who knows? Joey found it. Boy stuff.”
“An app that turns you into a girly-girl is boy stuff?” Sam shook her head. “I’ll bet he got it on the Dark Web. That’s just great.” She paced back and forth next to my bed. “God knows what kind of shit they put in there, and you had to go and stuff it into your head!”

I stared out the window of my attic apartment. Nothing much had changed. I knew I was still a boy, under all the accessories, but when you look as pretty as I do—who cares? It only makes sense to call myself Jaclyn and think of myself as a girl, because that’s what I look like. Joey put in a lot of work to turn himself into me, including speech therapy that makes me talk like a girl. In a few minutes I’d be fully dressed up as a woman; heck, I’d even smell like one. If no one can tell the diff between me and a real chica, why worry about it?

I told Sammie to lighten up. “I’m no hater, hon, but I might be more of a girl than you are.” I strolled back to the closet; that stripey dress wasn’t gonna cut it now. I paused, leaning against the wall. “Ya know what? I’m gonna prove it. Tonight. Guys are gonna be all over this girl.”

“Are you out of your mind? Aren’t you supposed to be my boyfriend?”

I had to smile. “That’s Joey. Take a good look, sister. I’m Jaclyn.”

She looked dismayed. “But… I thought… you’re both the same person, aren’t you?”

My lashes sank. “I’m not really sure. It just sort of feels… like I should be a girl right now. Looking like this, I’m supposed to be a woman, aren’t I?”

“Okay. Fine. Do whatever you want. I sure as hell can’t stop you.”

I sighed. “Aren’t you sweet.”
I sorted through the clothing on offer, my mind unfocused. Why on earth would Sammie want to stop me? From what—dressing up all sexy-like? Just because ‘mannaish’ is her so-called style doesn’t mean it has to be mine. What’s wrong with being feminine? And—I stopped searching when something clicked—there’s nothing more feminine than a classic white blouse. Dressing for show is so passe, and besides which it wasn’t even six o’clock. The evening had barely begun. Why not showcase my womanhood by wearing something simple, so as not to distract the people from seeing the real me? The female me, that is.

I pulled out the blouse, a soft cable-knit, and a black midi skirt I’d worn a few times before. I knew they were comfortable, and they fit me like a glove, and isn’t that what it’s all about? I returned Sam’s blazer and raided my lingerie stash for a pair of black panties. The top had a short zip in the back which kept getting stuck in my hair. Sam sighed when I looked helpless and flashed my baby-blues, but she came through for me. The pencil skirt had a slit in the back but above that it was silk-lined, so I skipped a slip and stepped inside. I managed that zipper myself.

_Hmm._ Too much dark, I decided. The black stilettos returned to the shoe tree, replaced by matte red sandals with spiky heels and a bunch of ankle/instep straps. I returned to the vanity to brush my hair, then sprayed the ends with dry shampoo and curled them—with a few puffs of _Big Sexy_ to make loose curls last.

I stood, striking a quick pose. “What d’ya think, Sammie? Do I pass?”

“Okay, you’re sexy as hell,” she grumbled. “No need to rub it in.”

“I’m not rubbing anything.” I added a pair of dangly earrings, then minced back to the closet, looking for my fav clutch: a black Armani with gold details. “It’s about taking it you-know-where.”

Sam rolled her eyes. “To the next level?”

“You got it.” I packed the purse with items a girl might need for an evening out: lipstick, mascara, liner, kleenex, even a condom or two. Keys and phone, plus a lady’s wallet with cash and a laminated photo ID. It wasn’t legal, of course, just a card with Jaclyn’s name, address and vitals, plus a pic from one of those sidewalk photo booths. No driver’s license, no credit cards; nothing with Joey’s name. I couldn’t take the chance. Passing is all about committing to the role.

I turned and shook back my hair. “All right... it’s time.”

She looked dumbfounded. “Time for what?”

“Time to go—as in out.” I headed for the door, the hem of my skirt grabbing at my knees. I had to straighten my back to keep my hair far enough off my face so as not to blind me. Besides which, I wanted my boobs to show.
“Where on earth are we going?” Sam asked, shrugging into her jacket as we paced down the two flights of stairs to ground level.

“You tell me.” I pushed through the front door ahead of her. “Where do girls go to have fun on a Saturday night? Emphasis on ‘fun’.”

“Whaddya mean—a club? Didn’t you tell me you just drive around town when you’re dressed?”

“No license, can’t drive,” I said. “Besides, that wouldn’t be taking it to the next level, would it?”

“I could drive your car. Sorry—Joey’s car.”

“Nah, let’s just call an Uber.” I ran the app on my phone. Yet another first for Jaclyn.

We waited by the curb. “We need a destination,” I said. “Where would a couple of footloose single gals go to have some fun and maybe meet guys?”

“And here’s me thinking that I was in a committed relationship.” Her tone verged on disgust.

I blew a delicate raspberry. “Get real, babe. You’re better off. This is girl’s night.” I flashed her a coy smile. “You know what they say: what happens at girl’s night, stays at girl’s night.”

An SUV pulled up and an older man hopped out. “At your service, ladies.” He opened the back door.

We got in. I nudged Sam. She threw me a glance. “Well… there’s this convention, and some of the people I work with…” She hesitated. “The girls are getting together afterward for drinks. They—”

“That’ll do,” I snapped. “Tell him where to go.” She spoke the name of the hotel, and off we went.

“I sure hope you know what you’re doing,” she murmured. “Feels like this could get out of hand.”

“You worry too much. “It’s girl’s night, ‘member? Feel free to cut loose. I won’t say a word to the boyfriend.” To make it official, I zipped my lip.
The cocktail lounge in the Four Seasons was all stained glass and dark wood, with leather seats and just enough lighting to see who you’re talking to. Mercifully, it was free of smoke. Numerous pairs of eyes tracked us as we made our way across the room; male eyes, of course, and it was no great mystery who they were staring at. Sammie’s cute and all, no doubt—but even so, compared to the glory that’s me she might as well have been wearing overalls and a straw hat. That isn’t me being vain or any such, it just happens to be true.

The ladies, all six of them, welcomed Sam with raised glasses and a hushed cheer. “Hey girl, you made it! Who’s your friend?”

Sammie looked nervous. “This is my cuz, Jaclyn. She’s from back East.”

“She’s cute,” one said loudly. “Better keep an eye on her, huh?”

Two of them shifted to free up a pair of seats. They were drinking Metropolitans, so we did too. I sipped the cocktail, letting the conversation ebb and flow around me, without joining. These women had worked together for years and they knew each other well. For me, it was enough to know that I’d been accepted as one of them. They say confidence is half the battle; it seemed the app had given me that in spades. It was the one thing I knew for sure had changed. The old me would’ve crawled into the woodwork, hoping no one would notice. The new me doesn’t sweat the little stuff, ‘cause the new me is a woman.

“Hey, Jaclyn.” The blonde lady next to me leaned closer. I managed to recall her name from the initial introduction: Tamara. “Where ya from?”

That question I was ready for: Cincinnati. My mother’s older sister lived there, I’d visited the city a bunch of times with my parents, and I used to watch *WKRP* a lot.

She asked what brought me to the City by the Bay.

I resisted the urge to say ‘an airplane’. Bad puns are more of a guy thing and being a guy didn’t fit the self-image that was taking shape in my mind. Instead, I talked about looking for work as far away as possible from the family—not much of a fib there—and Tamara filled me in on expensive real estate and sky-high rents. Not exactly girl stuff, but close enough.

By the time I hit bottom on my second Metropolitan the gathering was starting to break up. Three of the girls had left and sharks were moving in on the rest of us. Two men had taken seats at the table; some old dude with a receding hairline who couldn’t keep his eyes off my chest, and a guy my own age who was chatting up Sammie. They seemed to know each other, although I’d never seen the guy before. He was, I thought, a little out of her league. Just a little.
After Tamara left I scooted off to the ladies’ room, then parked myself at the bar, hoping to try some cocktail I’d never had before—another small step toward the next level. Joey wasn’t much of a drinker, so I was already nearing my limit. On the other hand, I’m pretty sure I’m made of sterner stuff than him.

That’s when nearly-bald man stepped up and offered to buy me a drink. I gave him an ‘are you kidding me?’ stare, then ordered a French Cosmopolitan, which was Grand Marnier with a dash of grenadine. When I half-turned to powder my nose, my compact picked up the idiot clumsily spiking my drink with white powder.

This, I knew, was the sort of thing women have to watch out for, but—curiously—I wasn’t angry. It seemed to validate me as a woman in a way I couldn’t have managed myself, although he surely didn’t intend it that way. Besides which, no one else had noticed and I didn’t relish making a scene. Instead, I thanked him for the drink and took it back to the table.

I had been thinking to leave it there, untouched. But Sammie was still chatting with the cute guy that she knew and I didn’t, and I was left to ponder why on earth he would bother with her when I was available. A new plan formed in my female mind. The details were fuzzy, but the first step involved placing my drink next to hers—and transferring my fingers to the stem of her Metropolitan. When she tried to pick it up, I said, “Oops, that’s mine,” and bore it away to my lips. With barely a glance, she picked up the spiked Cosmo and drank.

Fifteen minutes later she was slurring her words. “Whoa there, girl,” I said, acting all worried. “I think you had enough.” I tried and failed to help her up.

The cute guy was quick to step in. We each took an arm and steered her toward the exit. He introduced himself as Thorsten, which explained the blond curls. “I have a room upstairs,” he said. “You’re welcome to crash there.”


Thankfully, he persisted. “I didn’t mean it that way,” he said. “It’s a suite. My dad made the res; he didn’t want me on the road tonight. You and Sam can take the bedroom. I’ll crash on the couch.”

Such a gentleman. I pretended to think about it. “Well… I guess that’s okay.”

Five minutes later, we tucked Sammie into a king-size bed. She was totally out of it. I took off her shoes and drew the blanket over her chest, then sauntered back to the sitting room. “She’s gone. Me, I’m not sleepy at all.” Pointedly, I perched myself in the middle of the room’s only couch.

“Me neither.” Thorsten opened the minibar. “Can I get you something?”
I finger-combed my hair. “Got any Smirnoff?”

“Oh man, it’s crazy, there’s like six different flavors in here.”

“Surprise me,” I said, feigning disinterest. More preening followed.

He brought over a small bottle of the Green Apple. “Care for a glass?”

“Bottle’s fine.” I unscrewed the top and took a sip. In spite of being made of sterner stuff, I was beginning to lose focus. If I let this go too long I might not be able to follow through. I patted the seat next to me. “Tell me about yourself.”

He did so, between swigs from his own bottle. Men like to talk about themselves. I learned that from being one the past few years, since whenever Joey had begun shaving and pleasuring himself—not necessarily in that order. But I was a man no longer, that much was obvious. The app had altered my mindset to the point where the thought of getting down and dirty with a dude induced heart-felt palpitations rather than stomach-twisting dry heaves.

I drained the bottle and set it aside, then rubbed the back of my neck, sending hair spilling over my chest. “Oh wow… nearly midnight and I am jazzed.”

Thorsten—and he did look a bit like the comic-book God of Thunder, though with shorter hair—fingered his own bottle, looking thoughtful. He watched me wrap a stray tress around my forefinger and flutter my lashes. “I barely know you.”

“International woman of mystery, right here,” I said. “Isn’t that enough?”

We locked eyes. For an instant my heart stopped. It was as though I ceased to exist as an independent entity—willpower gone, mind running on fumes. In that instant I was nothing more than the object of this man’s desire—and given that he was both bigger and stronger than me… it seemed inevitable he would get what he wanted. When his arm slid across my shoulder I leaned into his embrace, our lips met—and I willed him to take me.

It was time to level-up. A wave of feminine desire raced through my body. Arms encircled me, hands stroked my hair, firm lips played mine like a flute. My breath came in random gasps, when he deigned to release me just long enough to change his angle of attack. This too is the sort of thing women have to concern themselves with, because once you ‘release the beast’ of desire it’s hard to put the genie back in the bottle. Not that I wanted to.

I kissed him back, running my hands across his chest, then his broad back. He smelled like Aqua Velva, which was a bit disturbing because my father often used the product. But there was a musky tone to his scent, so maybe it wasn’t exactly the same version. Not that it mattered. I was bound and determined to go the distance. The next level beckoned.
Five minutes later my skirt and blouse were on the floor, alongside his clothing, and Thor was plucking at my bra strap. There was only so much further this could go before an unpleasant reality came to light.

“One problem…” I tweaked the tip of his manhood where it strained against the rough fabric of his tighty-whities. “It’s kinda my time of the month, boo-bear. But there are other ways we can do this—if you’re into it.”

Unsurprisingly, he was. I’d have been shocked sideways if he changed his mind at this point; very few men could. His eyes glazed as he kicked off his briefs. And then, there it was: Mount Everest. The biggest specimen of its kind I’d ever laid eyes on, though I didn’t have much to compare it to.

Feminine instincts took over. I stroked the length of it, then touched the tip with my tongue, playfully making eye contact. I let it slip inside, then out; repeating as necessary, while caressing the exposed shaft. I knew I’d only have a moment to get it all down when it erupted, but I was ready.

He stopped me. “Let’s do the other thing,” he said, caressing the side of my head. Like I said, a gentleman. I’d chosen well.

Languidly, I stretched out on the couch, smiling my approval. He turned me over, pulled down my panties, and did me the old-fashioned way: as in, the kind of birth control that cannot fail. And it was good. I felt filled-up, the way a woman should, and fulfilled as only a woman can be. I moaned a little and stroked his thighs, and when it was over he cuddled me in a way that told me it wasn’t all about sex.

Thorsten cared. Either that, or he was painfully adept at manipulating women, and I was naïve enough to believe him.

Whatever. All that really mattered was that I finally got some—as a woman—and that was the ultimate next-level of them all.

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Sammie shook me awake the next morning. She lay next to me in bed, I atop the blanket and she underneath it. “What the heck happened? Where are we?”

I stretched. “We crashed in your friend’s suite. You were out of it.”

“Thorsten?” She glanced at the closed door. “Is he here?”

I checked the clock. “He poked his head in an hour ago. Said he had get home for some family thing, but the room’s paid for and we can have breakfast brought up. I’m thinking… filet mignon.” Steak was my go-to morning-after meal.

Her jaw dropped. “Oh my god… you had sex?”
I propped myself on one arm. “It was awesome, Sammie. I was, like… the girl for reals.” I ran my fingers down my side, showing off decidedly feminine curves. “I told him I was on the rag, but we could like do anything else—and then we totally did. I took it to the next level!”

She looked at me pityingly. “You do know he’s gay, right?”

This time my jaw dropped. “Say what?”

“Gay—as in, not straight. I told him about you. I think it was when you went to the little girls’ room. He thought it was pretty cool, what you were doing.”

“Oh god… he knew?” I flopped back, staring at the ceiling.

“Uhm, that’s good… isn’t it? You weren’t fooling the guy, which isn’t nice, you know. It’s pretty damn risky too.”

“I guess so. But, ya know—it’s not the same.”

“What’s not the same? Sex is sex.”

“Not up here.” I tapped the side of my head. “Here’s me thinking I was being a woman for real, for the first time in my life. Instead, I was just some dork dressed up as a girl who happened to be doing it with another guy.”

“You lost me. What’s wrong with that?”

“Nothing!” I made a fist, bouncing it on the mattress. “I just… wanted to be the girl, that’s all.” I looked at her. “I know you don’t get it, Sam, but I have this weird need to be the woman. Ya know, in the guy’s eyes.”

“Are you telling me you actually want to trick a man into having sex? Don’t you know how dangerous that is? Not to mention that it’s wrong?”

“I can’t help wanting it.” Despair flooded through me. It was never going to happen—and if I wanted to stay on the right side of my conscience it never would. I struggled to sit up. “Do you know what it’s like to want something so bad that it feels more important than, uh, living—but you still can’t do it?”

“All part of that curse you mentioned, huh?” All I could was nod.

Sam put her arm around me. “Tell you what. The next gay guy you decide to pick up who you don’t know is gay—I won’t tell him you’re a guy, okay?” She cocked her head. “Then, if you ever manage to get him into bed, he won’t mind your little surprise and you’ll feel at least somewhat validated as a woman. Deal?”

“Deal.” We shook on it, then called room service. ■